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CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

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AN ESSAY

IN AID OF THE BETTER APPRECIATION OF

CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

ILLUSTRATED FROM THE WRITINGS OF

BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

BY

ALGAR THOROLD

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1900

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PATRI, AMICO

HUGONI EDMUNDO FORD, O.S.B.

STI. GREGORII MAGNI APUD DOWNSIDE PRIORI

GRATÈ

FILIUS, AMICUS

A. L. T.

Errata.

Page 18, line 5, *for* and the mass of men who are not artists with their painted joys, &c., *read* and the mass of men who are not artists, with their painted joys, &c.

,, 23 ,, 20 ,, place *read* praise.

,, 51 ,, 18 ,, no momentous consequences, &c., *read* its momentous consequences, &c.

,, 174 ,, 29 ,, check *read* checks.

CATHOLIC MYSTICISM

In these days, when the methods of democracy not only claim the outer court of a man's social environment, but also threaten the shrine of his thought, many words of ancient descent, accustomed in the past to rule, without question, the peoples of the soul, are fallen, veritable *rois en exil*, on evil times. Faith, for the most part, bereft of her palaces, must dwell in the hiding-holes of superstition, her deadliest foe: reason seems on the way to becoming indistinguishable from the trained use of developed senses. Mysticism, the sublime child of faith and reason, that once led the greatest of our race to heights of now scarcely imaginable intensity of living, hobnobs, in popular esteem, with the patter of the sorcerer and the *tireuse de cartes*.

But the right of words, unlike that of kings, is truly divine, and if the scheme of the world be guided by reason, some day, at length, must surely see these legitimate sovereigns restored to their thrones.

I have elsewhere tried to uphold the 'pretensions' of mysticism in general to be the sole and supreme mood to which a man must needs betake himself as soon as he has outgrown the superstitions of rationalism and sensualism—the mob rule of the senses, and the fallacies of 'education.' Here I shall endeavour to deal with the constituents of Catholic mysticism. In the course of this attempt it will be necessary, incidentally, and by way of illustration, to introduce some elements in a hypothetical process of 'conversion,' and also to suggest the sort of way in which the modern Catholic mystic may be disposed to meet, for the sake of his own peace of mind, some current objections to Catholic faith and practice. I trust I shall not be understood to be, in this, trenching on the ground of apologetics proper. That is an outwork of theology with which I am wholly incompetent to deal. My aim here is much more modest. I wish to be understood as introducing these elements solely by way of illustration, for their psychological rather than for their theological value. It cannot, I think, be doubted that, whether it be right or not to think thus (a question I am not here concerned with), many persons are coming to think in some such manner as that of my hypothetical mystic. And, under these circumstances, it cannot be without psychological, and

even sociological value to attempt to determine the scope and goal of such a tendency.

The Catholic mystic, apart from his individual vocation to real apprehension of Spirit, finds himself in relation to the Church, *i.e.* to humanity organised from the religious point of view, and it is, of course, in this relation and what comes of it, that his peculiar note consists. The Catholic or Universal Church is an organic unity of which the baptised individual is a member. It has its theoretical and practical conditions of membership; its dogmata of faith and morals. Like every organism its constitution is strictly hierarchical, its machinery of authority culminating in the law of Peter, irrevocable, infallible; infallibility being the sanction proper to a revealed system, such as the Church claims to be. The task of the Catholic mystic is so to adjust these social claims to his individual vocation, that not only neither be defrauded, but that each subserve the other. Now the Church may be regarded from two points of view, that of faith, which is proper to the Catholic only, and that of observation, which is common to all men. Viewed in the latter way, in its purely phenomenal aspect, *i.e.* as an element of possible experience to every observer, Catholicism is seen to be nothing else than the world-society of souls. Other

societies of souls there are in plenty amongst men, but in them the religious organisation has not reached its goal of universalism, it is still tribal or national, as the very names of these societies indicate. Their organisation may also be said to be opinionative, in contradistinction to that of the Church, whose organisation rests upon faith, in that whereas Catholics believe certain doctrines because they are members of the Catholic Church, the members of a sect or of a denomination belong to this or that body *because* they believe particular doctrines. In this case, the Church does not make the doctrine, but the doctrine the Church. The motive of their belief to the individuals composing the society is anterior to the existence of the society, let alone its authoritative teaching, for the society, in this case, comes into existence, not to teach anybody anything, but purely as the social expression of a certain pre-determined unanimity of opinion among the individuals who compose it. Whatever claims on the human conscience such a society may afterwards come to make, it will be for ever logically impossible to exercise the Catholic quality of faith in regard to its teaching.

It is often supposed by those who approach the subject of Catholicism from the point of view, and with the historical methods, of the enemies of the Catholic

Idea, that the mystic will necessarily find himself in a state of more or less constant friction with the ecclesiastical authority. Of course this is not so. The friction is not constant or in the least inevitable. But under certain special circumstances of misunderstanding, on one side or the other, such friction may, and occasionally does, arise. Now the difficulties which may thus occur between the mystic and the religious society are more or less analogous to those which often occur between the individual genius and the civil society ; for the mystic is the religious genius. The analogy is not perfect, for civil authority cannot, as such, claim an ethical sanction, and the proper solution of the religious difficulty is wholly *sui generis* and without parallel in the civil order. Still, the object towards which the social instinct works, whether on the religious or on the civil plane, is one and the same, *i.e.* the greatest good of the greatest number, and it is the real or apparent conflict between this aim and the personal good, perceived, and therefore desired, only, it may be, by the solitary thinker, that constitutes the crisis in either case. Let us see, then, what are the elements of such a difficulty when it occurs between an individual thinker and the civil society in which he lives.

To go back to truisms : a man is a social being in

virtue of that which he has in common with every other man ; he is a genius if his individuality be so far developed in virtue of that which he alone possesses. The rope which binds him to his fellows is plaited out of the strands of those needs which all men find it necessary, or at least desirable, to satisfy. As life goes on, and the nervous system grows more refined and intricate, these needs become more complex. It is hardly necessary to point out that the social organisation of a Central African tribe is as truly such as the municipal arrangements of London ; it is simpler, because the circumstances with which it has to deal, the needs it has to meet, are more elementary. But man also exists as an individual, wholly unlike any of the other individuals together with whom he forms the social organism, of which interior dissimilarity the fact that no two individuals are exactly alike in feature is an effective symbol. Whether this dissimilarity consists in the mixing, so to speak, of the qualities which go to make the human being, or whether each soul, to use a term we can neither fully understand nor do without, be, as Aquinas teaches of the angels, a species in itself, this differentiation of individuals has to be admitted as an ultimate fact in experience.

Here, then, we have a double aspect of man, the

individual and the social, and the point to note about these aspects is, that they both represent conditions necessary to his existence. For it should be observed that, without some social environment, the brain of the human infant, even if, in other respects its material life survived, would certainly not progress to the human level, so that, to this extent at least, the development of the individual is the work of society. Deprived of human intercourse from the first, a man would be no more than a tricky sort of mammal. It is his social environment that develops in him the latent germs of ideation ; but when these germs have so far developed as to enable him to reach the notion of the Self, of his own personality, limited and for ever solitary, the further development of his individual genius no longer depends on the external stimulant of society, but becomes, in proportion to his personal achievement, more and more self-actuated. The craving for unification in ideas leads many to absorb the one aspect of life in the other, and so we have individualists who push their theories to social anarchy, and, on the other hand, communists, in whose ideal state, as such, the individual would be starved out.

This craving for unification is in itself, of course, a good thing, and directly or indirectly the source of

all philosophy and religion ; but its proper satisfaction does not lie in the absorption of the one aspect by the other, but in the discovery of a synthesis in which both aspects can be included and made one. Now, putting aside the hypothesis of a supernatural end to human life, in which both the above aspects of man should eventually be made one by God,—a hypothesis which certainly cannot be entertained on rational grounds alone—it is evident that such a synthesis has yet to be formulated. Sensible folk consequently accept in practice a compromise. The thinker, if he be a wise man of the world as well as a theorist, wil accept certain conditions of life to him inherently absurd, in order to secure himself liberty on another plane. After all, in order to think it is first necessary for him to live, so even if from a speculative point of view, adultery should be to him a venial pastime, and property a baseless superstition, he will not act on either of these convictions in a propertied and monogamous society. Doubtless he will have his reward.

Now if the Church be regarded simply on its phenomenal side, this reasoning will hold equally good for the Catholic mystic. It is not, therefore, surprising that those who expressly exclude any other view are driven to the conclusion that a genuine mystic, remaining in Catholic communion, only does

so by the exercise of some such economy as I have supposed the radical thinker to practise. But the moment that the Church is no longer regarded in this purely subjective way—no longer regarded, that is to say, as a merely social exteriorisation of a particular group of man's religious opinions, which, as we saw just now, is the formative principle of the sect as such—the whole perspective of the case alters. The Church is given objectively in her claim to credence as a Revelation, and it is as such, or not at all, that she has to be accepted. And we may here observe, in passing, that the absence of corroboration of the independent existence of that aspect of reality (by hypothesis otherwise unknowable) which she claims to reveal to us, need not cause much distress to those who, in the face of the mysteries of life, are wise enough to submit to her. The Catholic does but postulate in the religious order a correspondence between experience and reality which has no less to be postulated in any order of knowledge possible to man. 'From the beginning to the end of our perceptive and imaginative activity, we are synthetising the material of experience into unities, the independent reality of which is beyond proof, nay, beyond the possibility of evidence. And yet the life of intelligence, like the joy of contemplation, lies

entirely in the formation and inter-relation of these unities. This activity yields us all the objects with which we can deal, and endows them with the finer and more intimate part of their beauty. The most perfect of these forms, judged by its affinity to our powers and its stability in the presence of our experience, is the one with which we should be content; no other kind of veracity could add to its value.'[1]

It may also be noted that the validity of the religious order can only be evaded on condition of absolutely ruling out, once and for all, as a disease of the imagination, the religious tendency of a man's nature, with all the corollaries in our mutual relations and our estimate of the value of life which can be shown to depend on it. At this cost, but at no less, can we be logically freed from the claims of the 'soul'—and of the Church.

Let us now endeavour to see more exactly what is involved in this claim of the Church to embody a positive revelation; having done this we shall be in a better position to see the true solution of the possible difficulties between the Catholic mystic and ecclesiastical authority.

First of all, the claim to inerrancy of dogmatic

[1] *The Sense of Beauty*, by G. Santayana, p. 190.

statement, or to what is called the infallibility of the Church, is necessarily involved. This does not mean that all the propositions of faith and morals maintained in the Catholic Chair all over the world are final and true, but it does mean that there exists in the constitution of the Church a means of determining their truth; that a certain number of them have been so determined, and that, in process of time, as necessity may demand, others will be so determined. It does not mean that these determinations, or definitions as they are called, may lawfully be made in disregard of ordinary human knowledge, in those few cases where such human knowledge really bears on the subject; a decision of the Church may supplement human knowledge: indeed, at the cost of pleonasm it must do so; no theologian could admit that it could finally contradict it. Nor is it necessarily involved in the principle of ecclesiastical infallibility that the Truth should be stated in the fullest or best possible way; what is involved is that the definition, as far as it goes, is without error, and that this immunity from error is not the result of the superior intelligence of the defining authority, but of the divine guarantee. When the Vatican Council defined the seat of ecclesiastical infallibility, the Roman Pontiff was said, in the words of the decree, 'to enjoy that

infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer wished His Church to be endowed'—neither more nor less. Moreover, the practical corollary follows that these definitions are, as such, irreformable, and that hostile, as distinguished from explicative, criticism of them is forbidden. That which does not claim to be the result of human intelligence cannot logically be held amenable to its sanctions: you do not accept or reject an ecclesiastical definition on intrinsic grounds, but solely on the ground of your acceptance or rejection of the promulgating authority.

Now what is the relation of the mystic to these definitions or dogmata of the Church? It is important to get this out clearly, for it is often supposed that the mystic's personal communications with God supersede in his own case the social revelation of which dogma is the ratified expression. Such a view involves a total misunderstanding of what the Church means by dogma.

In the Catholic view dogma is not opinion freely selected by the individual for the sake of his particular needs at the moment, but is a revealed statement of spiritual truth, by hypothesis otherwise unknowable to the human mind. Not all the intuitions of all the mystics in the world put together could assert the Catholic doctrine of the

Incarnation or of the Sacrifice of the Mass, though the teaching of the pre-Catholic mystics is redeemed from much that seems puerile, and is at length seen in its true perspective when viewed in the light of those sublime mysteries as the fulfilment to which they unconsciously aspired. In this way Catholic doctrine sheds a retrospective light over mystical speculation. There are passages of Plato and Plotinus into which only a Catholic can read their fullest implications. Yet it is not meant by this that the Mass is the logical terminus of the Platonic idea, but rather that the latter was one of the divinely appointed means of educating man into a state of soul in which he could appreciate the former when, *in sacri plenitudine temporis*, it should be revealed to him. The Catholic mystic would, then, mistake alike the nature of dogma and the claim made on his soul by Revealed Religion, were he to discard in favour of his individual insight the doctrinal generalisations 'of faith' among Catholics. Such action would be retrogressive. He would be substituting natural for supernatural mysticism. For—and in this is to be found at once its crux and its only possible justification—Catholicism claims to be a supernatural religion.[1]

[1] Appendix A.

The claim made on his soul by Revealed Religion! Ah! here is the rub; in this lies the 'open secret of Christianity.' Let us try to consider what this claim amounts to. And first, as to its extent.

Revealed Religion, directly or indirectly, claims the whole man. It directly claims his intellect, his belief, and the flowering of his emotional being, his love. It indirectly claims his will. I say *indirectly*, for the service of the will unprompted by love has nothing to do with Revealed Religion, but belongs to ethics, which, as such, is a conception wholly alien to a system which counts among its saints Thais, the penitent light o' love, and Moses, the converted negro bandit. This is of course a tremendous claim, and one may well be surprised at the lightness, the *légèreté* with which so many, both of those who admit and of those who deny, appear to treat it. In return for this complete service, Revealed Religion claims to heal, once and for ever, the wound of man. Moreover, given the Church's definition of that wound, there can be no doubt but that Catholicism does heal it. If the Catholic analysis of human nature (which is by no means only held by Catholics) be once admitted, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the Catholic saint represents that nature perfectly restored. And to say as much as this is to say more

than may at first sight appear. For it amounts to saying that the resources of the Catholic system are equal to meeting to the full all possible demands that can logically be made on it. It will, no doubt, be said that the natural logic of things will account for this. But in human affairs, more particularly religious systems, is this natural logic so very apparent? Does not the arbitrary, the unexpected, constantly cut short the line of ideal development? Is not religious speculation, in particular, a byword for confusion of thought and tongue? We, at least, who come of Protestant heredity can hardly think otherwise. That there should then be just one system among warring theodicies both speculatively and practically complete is surely no slight thing, and must, one would think, arrest the inquirer's attention. I do not say that alone it can do more, but this, at least, it would seem it must do. The question remains of the value of the Catholic analysis of man; it is the view taken of this that probably in all cases determines the conscious attitude towards Revealed Religion.

Now by the Catholic analysis of man I do not here mean the dogma of the Fall, which is a revealed mystery, and as such incapable of independent observation, but rather the state in which, according to Catholics and many others, man finds himself on

this planet. This state may be summed up in one word—insufficiency. Man is not sufficient to himself. His nature forces him to create ideals which he is incapable of attaining; on no side, in no single one of his forms of activity, is it given to him to realise the equation of thought and being, of desire and fact. The floating rocks of metaphysical truth are for him enisled in the black waters of scepticism; his god-like reason can ultimately solve no concrete problem, for the condition of its inerrancy is to be confined to the abstract. His deepest craving is for happiness, adequate to infinite desire and permanent while the conditions and perhaps the inner nature of life make of such a demand a bitter mockery.

> His speech is a burning fire,
> With his lips he travaileth;
> In his heart is a blind desire,
> In his eyes foreknowledge of death.
> He weaves and is clothed with derision,
> Sows, and he shall not reap;
> His life is a watch or a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep.

Art is the greatest glory of man. Has the achievement ever once contented the artist's inmost desire? Towards the end of his life, one who achieved more than most, wrote these sad and beautiful words:

Giunto è gia 'l corso della vita mia
Con tempestoso mar per fragil barca
Al comun porto, ov' a render si varca
Giusta ragion d' ogni opra trista e pia ;

Onde l' affettuosa fantasia,
Che l' arte si fece idolo e monarca,
Conosco ben quant' era d' error carca ;
Ch' errore è ciò che l' uom quaggiù desia.

I pensier miei già de' miei danni lieti,
Che fian or s' a due morti m' avvicino?
L' una m' è certa e l' altra mi minaccia.

Nè pinger nè scolpir fia più che queti
L' anima volta a quell' amor divino,
Ch' aperse a prender noi in croce le braccia.[1]

---

[1] I subjoin the late Mr. Addington Symonds's beautiful translation of this sonnet for its independent poetic value :

Now hath my life across a stormy sea
Like a frail bark reached that wide port where all
Are bidden ere the final judgment fall
Of good or evil deeds to pay the fee.

Now know I well how that fond phantasy
Which made my soul the worshipper and thrall
Of earthly art, is vain ; how criminal
Is that which all men seek unwillingly.

Those amorous thoughts which were so lightly dressed,
What are they when the double death is nigh?
The one I know for sure, the other dread.

Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
My soul that turns to His great love on high
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread.

Never perhaps did a man achieve so much in such varied ways as this child of the gods. Michael Angelo succeeded supremely as sculptor, painter, poet, lover; yet this is what he has to say of his success. And the mass of men who are not artists with their painted joys, their pale, imitative pleasures, their deliberate raptures, their borrowed wisdom, their swift-coming death, what of them?

It is attempted nowadays to turn the force of such reflections by insisting on the social rather than the individual aspect of man. In tribe-work, mob-morality as Nietzche calls it, man is to find individual happiness. Yet what can be more absurd? We do not know what it is we want ourselves, and we propose to begin by giving it to others! Surely the utmost a man can do for his fellow is to put him in a condition in which he can seek his own happiness, can ask and answer his own riddle in his own way. Conceivably through centuries of altruistic effort which would be futile if not based on the ruthless extermination of those unfit to survive, society might reach such a stage of development as that health and work and comfort should be open to all. But the question of what to do with these advantages, how to invest this precious capital, would still gnaw at the brain of each solitary human being. It was the

inability to see this distinction between the nature of happiness and its conditions that led Sainte-Beuve to say of Pascal's argument for Christianity: 'Il est bien vrai en effet que le jour où, soit machinalement soit à la réflexion, l'aspect du monde n'offrirait plus de mystère, n'inspirerait plus surtout aucun effroi; où ce que Pascal appelle la perversité humaine ne semblerait plus que l'état naturel et nécessaire d'un fonds mobile et sensible. . . . le jour où le cœur humain se flatterait d'avoir comblé son abîme; où cette terre d'exil, déjà riante et commode, le serait devenue au point de laisser oublier toute patrie d'au delà et de paraître la demeure définitive—ce jour-là l'argumentation de Pascal aura fléchi.' The great critic cautiously adds: 'Mais la manière de juger dépend beaucoup ici de la manière de sentir, et c'est à chacun de voir si un tel jour est ou n'est pas en train d'arriver.'[1]

It is instructive to compare with Sainte-Beuve's method of handling the question, the view of a living English thinker, who sees the problem more truly. 'For, as increasing wealth and civilisation set a greater proportion of mankind free from the constant pressure of mere bodily wants, the pressure of spiritual needs becomes more clearly felt and is

[1] *Port-Royal*, tome iii. p. 331.

increased by every advance which is made in intelligence and culture. The more we succeed in removing such of the evils and limitations of life as can be removed, the more clearly do those which cannot be removed reveal themselves, and the more imperative becomes the demand for some assurance that these also are transitory, and that all things work together for good. Nor does this tendency of our nature deserve to be called, as it often is called, either selfish or abstract. If we care for virtue we can scarcely fail to be interested in the ultimate righteousness or iniquity of the universe, as judged by our moral ideals. If we care for the men and women we know, it seems not unnatural that we should sometimes ask ourselves what—if anything—will happen to them when their bodies have ceased to exist.'[1]

Now as regards the fact of man's insufficiency, most people who take the trouble to consider the matter will agree. Certain noisy and genial ones there may be who 'pity the poor neurotic who can say, *Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery*,' but have such *frati gaudenti* ever lived themselves? Does not life, *real life*, appeal as little to them as the great art of the

[1] McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, pp. 257–8.

world! The Bible means no more to them than 'Shakespeare,' but then 'Shakespeare' means so little.

On the cause of this insufficiency of man, however, thinkers are divided. Those who incline to a materialistic monism, in which mind is nothing but a manifestation of matter when the latter has reached a certain degree of complexity, are, by their philosophical position, precluded from attributing permanent value to any mood of mind as such. On this view man is discontented because he is imperfect, and he is imperfect because he is in process of development. There is no such thing as personality, which is but the sum of human conditions mechanically resulting in the illusion of individual consciousness. Hence the amelioration of his conditions will necessarily improve man, for being nothing but their product, he inevitably changes with them. On the other hand, the metaphysicians of Spirit, from Plato to Hegel, recognise, some more and some less fully, this wound of human kind.

It is not necessary to do more than indicate in this country the Christian theory. I quote Mr. Illingworth's admirable statement of this view, in which the cause of man's insufficiency is sin. 'Sin,

or moral evil, is a part of our total human experience which philosophy is bound to take into account ; and sin, though primarily due to the will, has infected the bodily organism of the whole human race ; moral and physical depravity mingling with and reacting on each other, till the entire resultant may be spoken of as the 'body of this death,' a complex whole in which it is impossible to disentangle the spiritual element from the diseased conditions and perverted functions of organ and tissue which personal and ancestral sins have brought about.'[1] Mr. Illingworth goes on to point out that this state of things indicates 'a real breach of universal order—a miracle in the objectionable sense of the term,' fittingly diagnosed in the New Testament as *ἀνομία* or lawlessness. For sin has resulted from the refusal of man to obey the most intimate law of his nature, to serve righteousness, discernible to him in the immemorial conception of the Law of God. This 'sense of sin' is not only due to Hebrew or Christian revelation ; engraved in the universal heart of man, it stalks through the pages of the Greek dramatist and the Oriental sage. Nor is there a better expression of it than the hymn of a saint who was neither Jew nor Christian :—

[1] Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 92.

Thus dost Thou harmonise into one all good and evil things,
That there should be one everlasting reason of them all,
And this, the evil among mortal men avoid and heed not,
Wretched, ever desiring to possess the good,
Yet they nor see nor hear the universal Law of God,
Which obeying with all their heart, their life would be well.
But they rush graceless, each to his own aim,
Some cherishing lust for fame, the nurse of evil strife,
Some bent on monstrous gain,
Some turned to folly and the sweet works of the flesh,
Hastening indeed to bring the very contrary of these things to pass.
But Thou, oh Zeus, the All-giver, dweller in the darkness of Cloud,
Lord of Thunder, save Thou men from their unhappy folly.
Which do Thou, oh Father, scatter from their souls and give them
To discover the Wisdom, in whose assurance Thou governest
All things with justice ;
So that, being honoured, they may pay Thee honour,
Hymning Thy works continually as it beseems a mortal man,
Since there can be no greater glory for men nor gods than this,
Duly to place for ever the universal Law.[1]

The recognition of sin as the cause of human disorder and consequent misery, not being confined to the explicitly Christian conscience, cannot be merely the subjective effect of Christian belief. And

[1] Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*.

the apologist does not, as is sometimes supposed, argue in a circle when he appeals to this endemic recognition as the base on which he proposes to erect the edifice of his own creed, as the fullest explanation of, and, assuming its reality, the sovereign remedy for, this terrible disease. For whether these self-judgments and terrors of the 'natural man,' are the dying rays of some paradisaical illumination, or the appropriate expression of the human consciousness when it reaches the level of religious activity, they are equally extra-Christian. And more than this is not required by the logic of his position.

Our hypothetical pilgrim in quest of revelation will undoubtedly be arrested by this phenomenon. As a 'natural' mystic he has learned not to live in the loose-fitting habit of sensory experience, to dig deeper in his search for reality than superfluous abstractions or physical generalisations. Nature indeed has always seemed haunted to him, but it is just this illusive suggestion of a Presence that has passed, this Real Absence from the only Eucharist that can be celebrated on Nature's altars, that constitutes for him his sacrament of despair. Arrived so far he will find nothing incongruous in the claim of Christianity to be received as supernatural. Indeed, he may fairly go further and find that claim, not

only not incongruous, but inevitable. On this wise, or not at all, must the birth of Christianity be. For he knows, by experience, that what is called the 'natural order' does not satisfy him. He is for ever at war with that order, and at war by what would seem to be a necessary law of his being. When, then the first thing that Christianity tells him is that the race, as a whole, has lapsed from a higher order, restoration to which involves, first of all its postulation, and secondly, the use of means which, when contrasted with the fallen habit of man, are appropriately described as supernatural, such a conception, far from throwing his ideas into confusion, appears to be just what is required in order to fulfil and justify those of them which lie the deepest. He feels that whether there be a God or not, whether the Catholic mythos be a fairy tale or the least inadequate expression of Eternal Truth, in this life only he, as an individual at all events, has no hope. He is told to work for the race within the scope provided by the natural order, but the same order tells him most unmistakably that the ethical and ideal qualities of man (the only human qualities which cause him to take any interest in his fellows) have only been accidentally developed in the course of a material evolution the purpose of which is utterly

inscrutable, and the end of which is rapidly approaching in the universal death which must overtake man and all his works when the planet chills. To suppose that the personality of man or his satisfaction is the goal of that evolution would be a grotesque superstition indeed. Either, then, there is no possibility of such satisfaction, or it must be found in a supernatural order.

The supernatural order, as such, cannot of course find counterproof in the natural. If the natural order be assumed to exhaust reality the supernatural must be utterly incredible, for the natural order only exists in virtue of a theory of causation, or rather of persistence of force, with which the idea of the supernatural is incompatible. And this applies equally to all miracles. That the intervention of any cause other than the persistence of one and the same force in varied manifestation should ever occur within the sphere of observable phenomena is on 'natural' grounds, simply a *deliramentum*. The free-will of man, if held to mean an undetermined independent direction by the human personality of any action whatever is as absurd as a resurrection from the dead.

The important thing to note about this is that it has no bearing on the question whether the supernatural order exist. For, supposing that order to

exist, it will be evidently impossible to trace it in the 'natural' order which, by hypothesis, it transcends. Moreover it will be equally impossible to verify, by natural methods alone, such an intersection of the two orders as is implied in a miracle. However strange and unprecedented an event may be, an investigator who relies on the assumption that the natural order exhausts reality is logically forced, at the cost of sacrificing that assumption (on which all his physical science is based), to refuse to admit such an intersection.

'Miraculous' phenomena undoubtedly occur in the modern as they did in the apostolic Church. Setting aside the hypothesis of deliberate and revolting fraud, there is no 'natural' explanation of many of the rigorously attested phenomena connected with the late Louise Lateau of Bois d'Haine.[1] Is a scientific man obliged in consequence to admit a miracle in the theological sense? Not in the least. He is of course face to face with a difficulty. But nature is full of difficulties. Such a difficulty, and a much more crucial one, is the impossibility of proving experimentally the evolution of life from not-life. It was thought at one time that experiments would prove 'spontaneous generation.' Those experiments

[1] *V.* Appendix B.

have been tried and they have failed. Here, then, is a gap in our scientific knowledge of nature. But whether the problem be the origin of organic life or the means by which a saint distinguishes between the Sacred Host and unconsecrated bread, no theory can be less plausible to a man of science than one which would compel him to admit an exception to the law of the identity and persistence of force, for the universality of that law represents the assumption on which the whole of his scientific knowledge rests.

These arguments may, however, appear to prove too much. Admitting, it will be said, that natural methods can neither prove nor refute the supernatural thesis, does not the problem of the supernatural become essentially a question of lunar politics? And, in a certain sense, this does follow from what has been said. The question of the supernatural is not only impossible to answer from the natural point of view, but, from that point of view, ought never even to be proposed. The only question is whether that point of view is the only one—that is to say, whether that assumption of the unity of the material universe expressed in the doctrine of the identity and persistence of force, admittedly, the necessary *prius* of ordered knowledge of the universe as expressed in terms of inevitable

sensory experience is equally the necessary *prius* of every other mode of viewing it. I do not see how the shadow of a plausible reason can be produced for thinking it is so.

The inevitable sensory experience of the universe considered as a collection of physical objects existing independently of himself (the orderly arrangement of which is the function, and the only function, of natural science), is but a small part of man's experience. Why, then, should the canons of natural science claim to rule the whole of his experience? Man experiences his own personality, his own power of spontaneous action, his ethical and æsthetic judgments, his craving for love and joy, and God, and in a measure the satisfaction of that craving. All these things are quite outside the methods of natural science. Right, Beauty, Will, God, Love, are mere nonsense-words, so many 'miracles,' in fact, if the fundamental assumption of natural science exhausts reality. And yet man undoubtedly experiences these things, and, if intensity and permanence are any test of reality, they should be the most real elements of his experience. Physical science, in the modern sense of the word, is a thing of yesterday; the perceptions of Right and Beauty are older than the hills, about whose geological formation our

professors tell us so much ; it is the monopoly of a small group of races ; some sort of spiritual perception seems to be almost, if not quite, universal to man, for man invariably expresses himself in his style good or bad and, as Mr. Pater says, ' soul as a quality of style is a fact.' But it is a fact which natural science cannot consider otherwise than as an illusion. A man of mystical temperament, one, that is, who experiences more immediately the impact of these spiritual forces than the itch of physical curiosity, will never allow that in the contentment of the latter lies the complete and sole explanation of the former. To do so would be for him to admit the less known as the key to the better known. For the ideas of God and the soul and the rest do not hang round his mind a mere fringe of arbitrary and inexplicable fact, a not-self embroidered on the self by the play of the logical impulse ; they spring together with his consciousness from the fount of his being ; their source, like his own, he cannot see. And their reality may well stand or fall with that of the most immediate element in his own experience, his personality, for which natural science can make no provision.[1]

To the man of mystical temperament as above

[1] *V.* Appendix C.

defined, and to him only, is the message of the Church addressed. Such an one alone keeps his head and heart cool in the midst of the bewildering rush of appearances ; such an one alone truly craves for an Ultimate Reality that shall be not merely an abstraction of his mind, but whose embrace shall content his whole concrete being. To this frame of mind Revealed Religion irresistibly appeals. For though Catholic dogma is not in itself ultimate in the sense of being final and complete (the Apostle tells us that we see and know but in part), the Catholic or Revealed Religion in which its Dogma is but an element, though a necessary one, is life in the ultimate Reality. Catholicism does not indeed present us with any pseudo-philosophy, attempting to sound in detail the relations of God with external phenomenal disorder, but reveals to us the interior universe of man, where all no doubt is mystery, but all is most intimately real. Here the darkness gradually lightens, and the dim forms of a perfect Order, in which God is All in All, stand revealed. The human soul, fixed at last on God, her true centre, slowly feels her way to a perfect equilibrium. All her powers, the mysterious forces of physical instinct, no less than the flights of pure intellect, come by degrees to expose themselves in their true hierarchy, an order so inevitable in its

gradual development, so convincing in its final achievement, that the poet's words are seen to be after all but sober fact—

> By Grace Divine, not otherwise,
> O Nature, are we thine.

It is this psychological experience that constitutes the justification of the claim of Revealed Religion. It may now perhaps be easier to see the true place of dogma in the Act of Faith. God alone is of course the ultimate Term of that Act. The Creed begins with the words: *Credo in Deum.* We do not make an Act of Faith in dogma as such, but in dogma as, and because, revealed by God. In other words, while the Divine Being is the essential end of Faith, the dogmatic content of the Act of Faith is necessary only with what theologians call *necessitas medii* as distinguished from *necessitas finis.* In that Act we bow the will to the mysterious Will of God revealing, we make no arbitrary assertion of personally acquired knowledge. Catholic Dogma is therefore supremely 'true' because, and only because, it is revealed as such by Almighty God. Its truth is not relative to the intellectual power which cognises it, but depends on the veracity of God who, in the simple words of the Catechism, can neither deceive nor be deceived.

This economy of belief is the radical difference

between Catholicism and all forms of non-Catholic Christianity. It is so because unless the authority of the revealing Deity be expressed through a delegated phenomenal medium, which by the necessity of the case must be held to be infallible, it ceases to play a real part in a world of phenomena, or to have the power of eliciting a real Act of Faith on the part of the believer. For, on any other hypothesis, whether that of an infallible primitive Church, which lost its power of teaching just when it was most needed (at the moment, that is to say, of division), or of that vaguest of all illusions, 'Bible Christianity,' the act of belief is no longer a submission to authority, but an act of conscious selection. It is no longer faith but opinion charged with religious emotion. Three hundred years ago Protestants did not think otherwise, and the Bible merely superseded the Church. No one of the innovators then doubted the capacity of the Sacred Book to do this. But since then a double series of objections to the Protestant thesis has been developed, and to an outsider at least it seems as if their combined effect must in the long run be fatal.

Protestants are logically tied to a special theory of inspiration which becomes daily harder to maintain against the increased knowledge of the history of the sacred documents derived from modern

criticism. To afford the necessary lever for an act of faith, that inspiration must be strictly verbal, entire, and final; if it be possible to dispute in any way the truth or finality of any statement contained in the holy writings, the whole Protestant position falls to the ground, just as the Catholic position would fall were it possible to dispute a single dogmatic ruling of the Church. No theory of different degrees of inspiration will serve, since it is obvious that only an equally inspired authority would be competent to determine so sacred and delicate a matter, and it is the basis of the whole Protestant position that no such equally inspired authority exists. So much for theory. In practice, when men have got their Bible they still have to determine what it means. And apart from the question of competence to do so, it is a patent fact that on the determination of that meaning they do not agree.

Supposing, moreover, these two difficulties settled, the fact would remain that the Bible does not contain creeds but principles. The creed has to be inferred from the principles. The connexion between the inferences accepted by Christendom as dogma (and in particular by all orthodox Protestants) is in some cases very vague. The fully developed Nicene doctrine of the Holy Trinity, for instance, cannot be

strictly inferred from the formula of Baptism and the gloss in St. John's Epistle. And as a matter of positive history we know that it was not so inferred. Other than Jewish traditions went to make it: without the Platonist doctrine of the Logos it could not have been expressed; its guarantee to Christendom was the decision of an Œcumenical Council ratified by a Pope. The Protestant who labours to remove what he considers the *débris* of ecclesiastical Christianity, in order to discover beneath it the pure religion of the Apostles, is in the position of a man who should spend his time in scraping layer after layer of sand from a piece of sandstone, thinking thus to come at the rock itself; he does not realise that it is the rock itself that he is destroying. There is a good instance of this misunderstanding on the part of one who would have objected very much to being called a Protestant. It was the opinion of the late Matthew Arnold that the religion of the future would be 'Catholicism purged,' and 'opening itself to the light,' 'conscious of its own poetry, freed from its sacerdotal despotism, and from its pseudo-scientific apparatus of superannuated dogma.' Once understand that it is not as fact that dogma is, humanly speaking, valuable, but as the key to the mysteries of the soul, as the successive land-

marks of man's interior development; while so far as imposed on us as fact, it is so imposed, not as deduction from observation or historical knowledge, (and not therefore as implying knowledge pseudo-scientific or otherwise on our part), but on the authority of the Church, whom we know independently through her Notes, and the sure 'mercies of David' to be the true mother of our souls, the perspective of the case alters.

It will, I know, be said that any assertion of fact, no matter by whom it is made, comes, as such, legitimately under the sanction of scientific criticism, and that such criticism by no means bears out the statements of the Church in the region of 'dogmatic facts.' Now, setting aside the question as to whether the scientific criticism of the New Testament has always, when destructive, been exercised in an impartial (*i.e.* a scientific) spirit, it is evident that the historical case against the Church's statements on the origin of Christianity, is, as far as it goes, circumstantial only. I mean that no one has collected authentie records giving a different account of the life of the Founder. The utmost that can be said from the historical point of view is, that the evidence producible for the Church's story is not as strong as it might be, and that on certain points

(some would say) it is fatally weak. Of course various ingenious theories have been devised, to show how, the facts being otherwise, the Church's belief came to be what it was. But they are theories expressly constructed to meet that disparity of fact and belief, while that disparity itself, in the absence of positive evidence, can only rest on grounds on which, as Mr. Balfour says, 'it is for philosophy, not history, to pronounce.' Now circumstantial evidence, in the absence of any other, may rightly decide a case, though the history of the law courts is there to show what appalling mistakes it may sometimes occasion, but the greatest amount of it is at once nullified by the appearance on the other side of a single credible eye-witness. And the Church is in far more than that position towards her children. For how does the case stand for Catholics? To begin with, they believe, rightly or wrongly, that the Notes of the Church have never been seriously refuted. They believe on grounds of observation and reason, which are open to all competently educated persons, that the continued life of the Church as we know her to be through so many centuries, and in spite of so many obstacles to her continued existence both within and without, constitutes a phenomenon as surely transcendental as

it is undoubtedly unparalleled.[1] Now the Church orders us to believe, under pain of separation from God, a number of more or less incredible things, —incredible, that is, if the test of their credibility be reason or observation. She claims as coming herself from God to teach us these things on the authority of God, irrespective of any possible corroboration from any other source whatever, for she it is of whom the very Scriptures testify. She claims in her dogmatic system to condense, as it were, the supernatural order into a form accessible to man. She is not from the natural point of view more or less improbable: from that point of view she is frankly impossible, and it is just this impossibility that renders her credible, as, of old, Tertullian saw. No one can believe in the improbable, but one can have faith in the impossible. If the Catholic dogmatic system were merely presented as a hitherto overlooked phenomenon, verifiable by the ordinary methods of phenomenal science, though running counter to the rest of our phenomenal experience, it would merely be in the highest degree improbable and hence quite incredible. And this would seem to be the way in which Protestantism does present

[1] The word 'transcendental' is here used in a strictly relative, and not in the technically philosophical, sense.

itself. Briefly, we can no longer be Christians in the Protestant sense of the word, but that furnishes no shadow of a reason why we should not be Catholics.

The dogmata of the Church are known among Catholics by the name of mystery. They are truths encased in language often more or less figurative. The mystery of the war in Heaven between Michael and the Dragon may be taken as a leading instance of this. We do not in the least know what angels are, nor does the Church tell us anything about them, except that they are beings superior to ourselves in the scale of creation, and capable of giving an intellectual worship to God. To apply the term 'war' to any proceedings of such beings is evidently a highly figurative use of language. But it may be true as far as it goes. Impossible as it may be to know exactly what is meant by the Fall of Lucifer, the mystery has a very important psychological bearing. For it removes the origin of evil from the will of man to that of a superior being through whose solicitation man was himself afterwards to fall. Evil is, then, an accidental, not an essential mood of man, and the Calvinistic view of original sin becomes an absurdity. Moreover the objection to the commonly received theological view of the connexion of physical

evil and suffering throughout the economy of nature with moral evil, which arises from the consideration of the long ages during which the sufferings of brutes must have preceded the very existence of man on the planet, is met by the fact that it was the fall of Lucifer rather than that of Adam which introduced for the first time moral evil with all its possible consequences into the Creation. In the same way it will be found that the most apparently cryptic dogmata when considered in their relation to man, *i.e.* in their human corollaries and consequences, are of the highest psychological value. And though they have to be stated in creeds and formularies, apart from the consideration of such corollaries their real life, their full truth, is not to be found in any abstract statement, but in their progressive fructification in the heart of man. 'Nunc vero liberati a peccato, servi autem facti Deo, habetis fructum vestrum in sanctificationem, finem vero vitam eternam. Stipendia enim peccati mors.'[1] The saint alone is the real proof of Christianity, he alone renders its dark sayings intelligible. 'The obligatory dogmata of the Church,' says Coventry Patmore, 'are only the seeds of life.' The justification of the Church, then, does not lie in the corroboration of human science as to the authenticity of her Scriptures

[1] St. Paul the Apostle, in his letter to the Romans.

or the occurrence of her miracles. The psychological value of her claims would be entirely unaffected by the simultaneous declaration of all the New Testament critics, that the Resurrection of Christ 'really did happen,' or by the conversion of any number of novelists at Lourdes. That value rests exclusively on the success with which she fulfils in us the task which she alone dares completely to undertake, the purification of the heart of man until he becomes capable by union with God, of conscious fruition of the Infinite; *finem vero vitam eternam.*

'Le vrai dogme centrale du christianisme, c'est l'union intime et complète du divin et de l'humain, sans confusion et sans division,' says the Russian theologian Solowiew. That this is no empty vaunt but a psychological reality, if ever there was one, is well known to students of Christian history. Benedict, Francis, Ignatius, Cecilia, Monica, Theresa, and how many thousand others, have undoubtedly enjoyed this experience of union with the Supreme Good. Among some it is indeed the fashion to say that Catholicism when younger and more vigorous did produce saints, but that its modern manifestation is but 'the loathsome exploitation of a worn-out creed.' Such shafts of ignorant malice fall short of their mark, and lie harmless like the lions in the legends of the martyrs—if a mixed

metaphor be pardoned—at the feet of saints of our own day, at the feet of a Curé d'Ars, a Lacordaire, a Clare Vaughan, a Père Olivaint, a Margaret O'Hallahan.

The claim of the Church on the individual conscience is not, however, solely based on evidence, however compelling, of sanctity in others. *Quod isti et istae, cur non ego?* and it is in his own experience that the mystic will ultimately find his strongest motives for faith, for he will inevitably discover that the Great Object of his soul's desire grows clearer and nearer in exact proportion to the purity of his conscience and to the fidelity of his adherence to Catholic practice. This process is of course psychological, rather than philosophical, and is therefore quite compatible with what schemes of examination of conscience call 'thoughts against Faith,' with a more or less constant suggestion of speculative insecurity which, usually quiescent, may sometimes be stung into a strange fictitious activity, by the irritant of an indiscreet apostle. In the case of those who have not had the privilege of early Catholic training, such a state of mind is, during the first few years of Catholic life, probably more or less inevitable. Nor has it the slightest psychological value. For the point is not, as the onlooker might think, that the believer is not

quite sure, but just precisely that he is quite sure, and yet cannot help questioning. It is the coexistence of certitude and question on the same point, that causes the poignancy of his pain. He questions in the abstract what he perceives to be true in the concrete. This trial, in its purely logical form, is not confined to those who embrace the Catholic Faith. Everyone must have gone through it who has come under the influence of the idealistic philosophy. The peculiar anguish of the believer is caused by the fact that the Object of Revealed Religion appeals to love rather than intellectual curiosity. Scepticism as regards the independent existence of chairs and tables, or even of planetary systems, leaves the soul unruffled, but the mere shadow of doubt blurring the adorable Image of our Divine Redeemer makes the heart shiver. And yet—it is perhaps this undercurrent of logically possible doubt that determines to some the finer edge, the rarer stuff of their Faith. For Faith, if no difficulties at all could be raised against it, would surely be a most 'mentally inexpensive' quality. There is more than a spice of the adventurer in the mystic.

The Catholic dogmata, then, are the seeds of life, to be sown in the ground of a willing heart, the heart of the *homo bonae voluntatis* to whom the

angels' message was directed. Isolated from each other, or stated theoretically only, they carry no self-justification with them, they show no promise of the life that is latent in them, they appear to be but arbitrary and intolerable bonds for the spirit of man. And thus viewed, viewed that is in the perceptive medium of the natural man, the *animalis homo* of St. Paul, they cannot possibly appear otherwise. So, too, if the simile be not considered too fanciful, a straight stick plunged into water necessarily appears crooked in proportion to its straightness. Much futile controversy, much waste of time and temper, would be saved if this were only more generally understood. Nothing short of the saintly mood justifies Catholicism, just as nothing short of the golden ear justifies the burial of the grain. Many things become clearer if the claims of the Church and Dogma are regarded in the light of this principle ; and in particular, the animosity felt by bodies of men as such to the Church. I do not at all mean that particular groups of thinkers, political or philosophical as the case may be, have not in their principles (which it is idle to blame them for, as without them they would not be in corporate existence) subjectively sufficient ground of objection to the very idea of the Church. I am referring to those many, neither thinkers nor

patriots, but private persons, each of whom taken singly would be found to have rather a weakness, as he himself would say, for Catholicism ; and indeed the Church touches human nature so tenderly, so graciously, and at so many different points, that it is not easy for any who come in contact with her not to a certain extent, on some point, to feel her charm. Now six of these persons together will be anti-Catholic. Moreover the motives which each sincerely believes to be actuating him have nothing to do with the motive really producing their corporate conviction. The former rest on prejudice and ignorance, and were these critics to compare notes the mistakes of the one would be found to refute those of the other. Their corporate conviction rests on something far deeper, far less innocent than prejudice or ignorance. The instinctive feeling of the natural man for the supernatural things of God acquires a greater momentum and velocity, so to speak, when it voices itself in a social bond founded solely on the natural order. In other words the motive which animates them is the instinctive hatred of the natural society, of the 'World' for which Christ declined to pray, for the supernatural society whose very terms of membership, the first of which is faith in Catholic dogma, necessarily appear to them repulsive and

absurd. Their motive is, then, the jealousy, or sometimes the inverted jealousy, the contempt, of the kingdom of earth for the kingdom of heaven. This is why what is called the national spirit is at a certain stage of its development invariably anti-Catholic, as much in Italy as in England.

This is so universally verifiable that the history of the Church in most European countries is much the same. First comes a period of rudimentary civilisation of the conquered and docile savage, during which the bases of the Church's power are laid deep in the simple hearts who love her, for they owe everything to her, both their vista of heaven and their opportunity, such as it is, of a little decent human happiness on earth.

Then follows an intellectual, spiritual, and artistic development, wonderfully expressed in the French and English Cathedrals, the primitive painters, and the period of scholastic philosophy closed by Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. Then the intellectual development begins to outstrip the spiritual: some one discovers that a state of grace is not necessary in order to work a printing-press. The intellect divorced from grace proceeds to think out a secular state, man borrows for egotistic temporal ends the social machinery first taught him by the Church to fit him individually for a heavenly destiny.

Little by little the older aspirations begin to die out, lingering here and there in special coteries, men are led away from their craving for the eternal by the incessant multiplication of the temporal, while life itself becomes increasingly difficult in a community where the pursuit of wealth grows more and more universal. New objects of interest arise ; art grows less human and less divine ; morality, depending for its motive and sanction on temporal social expediency, slips into the place of righteousness ; the individual has no time to think of his soul ; gradually the secularised state idealised as the Fatherland takes the place of the Church, and a national spirit is formed which only needs opportunity to betray its anti-Catholic principles.

Of course there are intermediate stages of compromise with the Christian idea, there are concordats, and there are National Churches. The *état athée* dares not show its face of death at once.

In the concordat the claims of the Church are theoretically respected, maintained even, but they are limited in their exercise by the temporal needs of the community. Parish priests make, after all, for social order, and are supposed to mitigate the incentives to crime that in the modern state lurk for the envious poor. Let them remain : they cost less and

serve the state better than an elaborate police. But religious orders drain the State of its most valuable elements: the exotic food of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness must therefore be placed under a prohibitive tariff.

The National Church takes a different and in some ways a franker line. In this case the State simply takes the Christian religion bodily over, reshapes its doctrines, modifies its moral law, and having cast aside the Keys of Peter tries to maintain its own impossible sanctions by borrowing the sword of Paul. But that two-edged symbol of martyrdom is too heavy to be wielded by any save by him whose legitimate heirloom it is. The English and Irish persecutions—the latter of which, according to Mr. Lecky, was the worst of all religious persecutions—are at last confessed to have failed abjectly. In Ireland the Faith has finally triumphed, and it is probably stronger and more secure in England at the present day than at any time since the publication of the Bull *Dominus in praecelsis.*

Now what has been the effect of this non-Catholic development of man on his religious belief? It surely must be admitted that it has been almost purely destructive. Religion has under its influence slipped from her ancient throne and become a waiting woman,

sometimes docile, sometimes querulous and obtrusive.

Modern etiquette considers a man's religious opinions, be they what they may, in the light of some personal idiosyncrasy which it would be bad taste to mention. A man is a Romanist or a Plymouth Brother or he has but three fingers on his left hand; in all these cases good manners dictate a like discretion. 'I know,' says Newman in a famous passage, 'that even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to a belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution; but I am considering the faculty of reason actually and historically; and, in this point of view, I do not think I am wrong in saying that its tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion. No truth however sacred can stand against it in the long run; and hence it is that in the pagan world when our Lord came, the last traces of the religious knowledge of former times were all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active and had had a career. And in these latter days, in like manner, outside the Catholic Church things are tending—with far greater rapidity than in that old time, from the circumstance of the age—to

atheism in one shape or another.'[1] Indifference to truth is the true source of the world's politeness on questions of religion. Opinion can live happily with its contradictory. The religious instinct, except in so far as it has reacted against these conditions, bids fair to die of atrophy. Speculatively unjustifiable from the point of view of modern naturalism it can only find its exercise in a world of dreams. For modern naturalism, as we have seen, can find no place for the self or the will or the soul; it therefore brands them as delusions.

Over against this negation of the most precious part of man's experience stand the affirmations of the Church. They have never changed and they never will. Proudhon says somewhere that Catholicism is the only really complete affirmation. This is a fair admission from an enemy. A Catholic might prefer to say that the Church alone affirms the reality of the whole man. Not of the body without the spirit nor of the spirit or body without the soul, but the reality of triune man created in the image of the Divine Triune. This brings us to the very heart of Catholic dogma, to the source of its formative influence on the soul of man as distinguished from its disciplinary action on his mind, to the Mystery of Creation.

[1] *Apologia*, p. 243.

The impression is prevalent in England that what is called 'Roman Mysticism' rests on some strained and fantastic view of the obligations of religion due to the fertile imagination of the Latin races. On the contrary, the fundamental element in the psychology of the Catholic mystic is nothing but recognition to the full of the consequences of creation. A modern spiritual writer who has often been accused of 'Italianism' most truly says: 'If Christianity were not true, the conduct of a wise man, who acted consistently as a creature who had a Creator, would strangely resemble the behaviour of a Catholic saint. The lineaments of the Catholic type would be discernible on him though his gifts would not be the same.'[1] The right appreciation of Catholicism depends almost entirely on the due apprehension of what is meant by this mystery. It is the fundamental dogma of Christianity. No momentous consequences extend through and justify every ramification of the revealed system, and its psychological effect on those who really believe and apprehend it, is probably more intense and searching than that of any other religious doctrine that has ever been believed by man.

In a matter depending so much on the closest

[1] Faber, *The Creator and the Creature*, *p.* 34.

verbal accuracy, it is well to begin by referring to the latest definition of the Church on the subject. The Vatican Council defines, then, that all things contained in the universe are produced as regards the whole of their substance by God out of nothing.

Si quis negaverit res omnes quae in mundo continentur secundum totam suam substantiam a Deo ex nihilo esse productas, anathema sit.[1]

The Vatican Fathers here adopt and confirm the definition given by St. Thomas of creation as the *Productio alicujus rei secundum suam totam substantiam, nullo praesupposito.*[2] The first remark that occurs on this is that creation is evidently not 'making' of any kind. To assert the 'making' of anything *nullo praesupposito* or *ex nihilo* is simply to state a contradiction in terms. Paley's transcendental watchmaker has nothing to do with the Catholic God. 'Making' necessarily implies the use of means, and no means are given in the aboriginal act of creation.

That act is rather one of absolute origination both of means and effect.

How such an act can take place is of course unknown to us who form part of the universe thus absolutely originated, moreover not only unknown but necessarily unknowable. Nor indeed can we

[1] Constitutio *Dei Filius*, can. 3, in c. 1. [2] 1ª 1æ q. 65, art. 3.

arrive at any detailed positive conception of such an act, the utmost that we can directly attain is the knowledge of what it is not, and hence indirectly of its psychological consequence to us. We have seen that creation is not 'making.' On the other hand the conception of 'Expiration' which plays so great a part in all Eastern cosmogonies except the Jewish, though not quite so far removed from it, is yet wholly distinct. This idea issues in the identification of the universe and God. Para-Brahm necessarily breathes forth his phenomenal manifestation. It is perhaps not without value at this point to note that no system except the Christian (in which may here be included the allied Judaic and Mahomedan theogonies) has ever taught the mystery of creation. The extreme abstractness of the idea presents but little attraction to the mythopœic imagination, and the insistence of the Church on this primordial dogma is said, I do not know with what truth, to be the principal difficulty in the way of the conversion of Hindus and Asiatics generally. Not only is there no word in all their various tongues to express the notion, but their hereditary bent seems entirely to prevent them entertaining it. Man left to himself does not believe in creation in the Christian sense, though he may, of course, use the term.

When the supernatural presence and guidance of Almighty God were withdrawn from the Jewish people, the doctrine of creation became in process of time obscured in the highly coloured pantheistic imagery of the Kabbala.[1] As to philosophy, it has invariably followed the line of least rational resistance, and unless it has virtually assumed Christian principles has issued in more or less expirational and pantheistic conclusions, except in the case of those thinkers (best represented by the English and French Deists of the last century) who, seeking the ultimate explanation of things in the principles of mechanics, were bound to assume for their purpose a carpenter or watchmaker God who had 'made' the mechanical universe.

The unique quality and at the same time the unfathomable mystery of the Christian doctrine lie of course in the meaning of the words, *ex nihilo*. According to Card. Mazella, a well-known Jesuit author, for many years Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Roman College, the phrase might have three meanings.[2]

It might mean (1) *ex nulla causa sufficiente*. This

[1] See Adam Franck, *La Kabbale*, p. 132.

[2] Mazella, S.J., *De Deo Creante*, art. 1; *De Creationis conceptu*, § 4.

meaning he rejects for the excellent reason that no production, creative or otherwise, can take place without a sufficient cause. The sufficient cause of the Creative Act is the unfettered Will of God.

A second meaning suggested is *ex nihilo sui.* This is inevitably to be predicated not only of creation but of every production. All it means is that the whole completed product considered as the *terminus effectionis* does not exist in its integrity before the act of production has taken place.

In the third meaning, *ex nihilo subjecti*, we touch the kernel of the mystery. Taken in this sense the phrase is inapplicable to any act of production except creation. For in every other possible case, though the product, the *terminus effectionis*, does not actually exist before the act of production has taken place, it does so potentially in its pre-existing elements, which by their interaction will, at a given moment, produce it. From which it follows that *nihil subjecti* alone is pure not-being, the *nihil sui* mentioned above is 'not pure not-being, but not-being with an aptitude to being,' a conception expressed by the Scholastics in the term *Privatio.* This conception is alien to the kind of production supposed in creation, for in the latter case there are of course no such pre-existing elements. Were such in existence, they would have

to be either God or not-God. If the former we should have Pantheism ; if the latter they would either have been created and the original difficulty would recur or not. If not, something besides God exists aboriginally and eternally—which is impossible.

I have implied above that there is some analogy between the doctrines of expiration and creation. Strictly speaking the analogy is between expiration and *conservation*, which is the term applied by theologians to the act by which God keeps the creature in existence. Conservation is the prolongation (eternal *a parte post* in the case of the human being) of the original creative act. In Coventry Patmore's words, 'Creation differs from subsistence only as the first leap of a fountain differs from its continuance.' The withdrawal of the Divine conservation would instantly withdraw existence from the creature. It is not meant that it would presently fade and die, but that it would on the instant cease to exist. Only that act of God's stands between it and the *nihil subjecti*, the pure not-being from which it was drawn. Moreover this conservation is no external preservation effected as by an influence from a distance ; it is the consequence of a real influx of God into the created life. Fr. Faber has the following remarkable passage

on this the uniquely characteristic point of the Catholic doctrine :—

'For we are never really outside of God nor He outside of us. He is more with us than we are with ourselves. The soul is less intimately in the body, than He is both in our bodies and our souls. He as it were flows into us, or we are in Him as the fish in the sea. We use God, if we may dare to say so, whenever we make an act of our will, and when we proceed to execute a purpose. He has not merely given us clearness of head, tenderness of heart, and strength of limb, as gifts which we may use independently of Him when once He has conferred them upon us. But He distinctly permits and actually concurs with every exercise of them in thinking, loving, or acting. This influx and concourse of God as theologians style it, ought to give us all our lives long the sensation of being in an awful sanctuary, where every sight and sound is one of worship. It gives a peculiar and terrific character to acts of sin. It is hard to see how levity even is not sacrilege. Everything is penetrated with God, while His inexpressible purity is all untainted, and His adorable simplicity unmingled with that which He so intimately pervades, enlightens, animates, and sustains.

Our commonest actions, our lightest recreations, the freedoms in which we most unbend—all these things take place and are transacted, not so much on the earth and in the air, as in the bosom of the omnipresent God.' [1]

Briefly, the Christian God is both transcendent and immanent.

One point more. The act of creation is the realisation in time of the eternal idea of creation, and results of course in its exact objective facsimile. From all eternity Almighty God has had the idea of the *musca domestica.*

The freedom of the creative act cannot be pressed to mean more than that the Creator was not impelled to create by any internal necessity. He created us of His free goodness, *bonum diffusivum sui,* He could not create otherwise than in accordance with His idea.

It is needless to pursue the statement of the doctrine any further, since we are not here engaged on pure theology but only on the psychological effect produced by belief in it. The following propositions would seem to sum up the mystery in relation to and as apprehensible by us in its simplest forms.

[1] *The Creator and the Creature*, p. 65.

(A) All that we are and all that we have is absolutely originated by the creative will of God realising in time His eternal thought of each one of us.

(B) That we continue to exist from one moment to another and to retain the use of any of our faculties is due solely to the conserving influx of God.

(C) We might never have existed, creation being a free act of God.

(D) The purpose of God's action cannot be less than adequate to God Himself: He must therefore have created us, as all other creatures, ultimately for His own glory.

(E) God is therefore not only our origin but also our last and only essential end.

All these propositions seem apprehensible enough as far as they go. Propositions (A), (B), and (C) are no doubt incomprehensible, *i.e.* we cannot see all round them or even apprehend all their implications.

Now if the above be accepted as a fair statement of the mystery in a form relatively apprehensible to our mind, a moment's reflection will show the tremendous consequences which result to man from belief in it. Of these the most painful to some minds is no doubt the way in which the dogma cuts straight across the line of metaphysic. It follows from the

freedom of the creative act that no *à priori* or metaphysical theory of it is possible. That creation is literally *ab-surd* we may cheerfully concede to the metaphysician. But probably not more than one or two in a generation have a real passion for pure thought, and these, if they did but know it, would find all, and more than all, they seek in theology. Man has unfortunately a number of less disinterested ambitions on which the effect of belief in creation is no less restrictive.

The various forms of man's ambition will be found, in so far as they transcend the itch for physical pleasure, to be but different manifestations of one master-craving, the thirst for dominion. In the dechristianised modern world wealth brings dominion ; wealth is therefore pursued at any cost. Now the idea of dominion is quite incongruous with that of a creature : it comes from a different quarter ; the utmost that can be logically attributed to him is a delegated power implying strict responsibility to the Creator. Such, neither more nor less, was the theory of Christian monarchy and aristocracy in the days when such things existed. Such to-day is still the theory of the Pontifical sovereignty of Rome. Such delegated power, precisely because it is only delegated, claims the authority belonging to the source

of its delegation. And only a power so delegated can logically claim a moral authority, a title to ethical obedience.

There is no moral reason why we should obey anyone but God. Civil society, except in so far as it represents the authority of God, has no ethical claim on us, its pseudo-authority can rest ultimately on nothing but force, in any case where its ruling conflicts with self-interest :

> For man's grim justice goes its way,
> And will not swerve aside :
> It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
> It has a deadly stride ;
> With iron heel it slays the strong,
> The monstrous parricide.

The appropriate function of the creature is, on the other hand, devoted self-subordination to the Divine Scheme in which he finds himself a part. Whatever we may think of the theology of *Parsifal*, it is a true insight that represents the converted Kundry as replying to Gurnemanz, who asks her what she wants, with the one word 'Service.' But who shall serve with unclean hands ?

In the great church at Assisi in Giotto's fresco stands the bride of St. Francis, the Lady Poverty, lifting pure pale hands to Heaven. Those venerable

hands are empty and bare, save for the tears and kisses of the sufferers she has relieved. They are empty, for their constant attitude of prayer precludes the hoarding of the alms on which she lives. She calls nothing and all things hers, for she is God's.

The evangelical virtue of Poverty is more than material or exterior denudation : in its perfection it implies the cutting out of the fibres of self-love, the soul renounces not only external but internal dominion as well, for does not the darling Ego belong to God as much as any other of His creatures? And this brings the soul by a natural transition to the second great Catholic virtue, Chastity. God claims the body, and He does not dwell in luxurious veins. If there ever were a safe truth, it is this. Our flesh must be kept clean and fair as His temple. Moreover, he who dishonours his body dishonours also that sacred Body which hung on the Cross, and which is daily lifted up in blessing on the altars of the Church. Since God became man everything human has become divine, and lust is inhuman. Observe the glitter in the eye as of a beast of prey ; note the grotesque brutish gesture, the thickness of voice as of some chattering arboreal creature. And if the blood must not riot,

neither must the will or the intellect which have to be restrained by obedience. The intellect obeys by assenting to the revealed mysteries on faith in God's word; the will obeys by squaring the life with the doctrine.

Now the important point to note about all this is that these tremendous consequences are not based on any exotic pietism, they follow necessarily from the simple premiss of creation, they do not apply to some special class of men alone; if they apply to any, they must apply to all God's rational creatures. The essential relation of the *Deus Creator et Remunerator* to a ballet girl is the same as to a Carmelite nun.

This brings us to another misunderstanding unfortunately not infrequent among imperfectly instructed Catholics; it appears to have grown up during that melancholy post-Tridentine, anti-Protestant age of the Church from which the Vatican Council has at length delivered us. The misunderstanding I refer to amounts to this.

Christianity contains two systems radically differing, the one intended for priests and religious, the other for lay persons. Perfection is in this view necessarily and exclusively attached to the former, which is the supreme and ultimately real expression

of the religion ; the laity can be at best but amateur Christians.

There is a double fallacy in this position. The abstract is confused with the real, and the means with the end. The Religious State, the state, *i.e.*, of those who live under vows of absolute poverty, entire continence, and complete obedience, is, as such, higher than the secular state where these vows are not. This is, of course, beyond dispute. This superiority is, however, wholly abstract, as abstract as the contrasted states. 'Reality is exhausted by what is.' What alone 'really' exists is a number of individuals in the concrete, some of whom live under vows, and some of whom do not so live. Relatively to these concrete persons, taken one by one each in his solitary individuality, it is impossible to predicate the superiority of the one 'state' over the other, it is wholly a matter of vocation. Luther was a bad religious, Sir Thomas More a lay saint. And in the actual contrast of those two lives lies the refutation of the second fallacy. The 'state' of Luther, a professed Augustinian friar, was the 'state of perfection' till the day of his death. No amount of licentiousness could alter that. But Luther, to put it mildly, lived imperfectly in that state. The 'state' of Blessed Thomas More, on the other hand, was not

echnically the state of perfection at all. He was a reat secular statesman and a wealthy noble, twice narried and blest with a numerous family. Yet in hat technically less perfect state he became so nusually perfect a Christian as at last to merit the rown of martyrdom for that Faith from which uther died a miserable apostate. The end proposed y their religion alike to Luther and to Sir Thomas ore was perfection, the perfect love of God imply- ng detachment from all else—from wealth, from lust, rom self-love. Luther chose the more perfect means o that end, inasmuch as he bound himself by vow to ive all his life under the conditions of absolute overty, entire continence, and complete obedience. We know how he kept his vow. Our blessed martyr fter years of prayer and reflection came to the onclusion that these high professions were by God's ppointment, in his case, *mirabilia super se*; accepting with surely true Christian humility the abstractly ess perfect means, he unfalteringly persevered and attained his end.

The end, then, of all Catholics is the same, the perfection' of the religious state consists in the greater perfection of the means to that end which it supplies. They are heroic indeed in the self-abnega- tion which they imply. Nevertheless, without the

possession of the mood to the production of which they are so obviously and skilfully directed, neither monk nor courtier will see the Face of God. And the essential ingredients of that mood are the fruit of no eccentric exaltation of spirit, but are, as we have seen, contained in the logic of creation. It is not essential to Catholic sanctity that a man should be under a vow of poverty, but it is essential that he should be indifferent to riches whether he possess them or not; not essential that his continence be completely and irrevocably made over to God by a vow of perpetual chastity, but surely essential that his physical desire being contained within those sacramental limits which transubstantiate brute appetite into the symbol chosen by Christ Himself to express His relations with His Church, the fine edge of his soul's craving be sharp-set on the beauty of God. It is not essential that he should have vowed complete obedience to a religious superior even in the details of his daily occupation, but it undoubtedly is essential that he should obey the known will of God, and if necessary take his place in 'the bright roll-call of those who have defied Cæsar even unto death.' Belief in creation is not of course the only element in the psychology of the Catholic Mystic, but enough has, I think, been said to show that it is the funda-

mental factor in his mental composition. The other mysteries of the Faith take their place in his progressively realised Credo, and their successive real apprehension indicates the stages of his spiritual development, while of that development the mystery of creation is the necessary point of departure.

Foremost among these are the mysteries of the Adorable Trinity and of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Then the wondrous cycle of His actions, at once Divine and human. The Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Emanuel—*God-with-us*—who is both our Almighty Creator and the redeeming Head of our race, in whom all our antinomies whether of reason or will are finally reconciled; nor will he overlook the Divine and human maternity of Mary, who being the Mother of Jesus is as truly our Mother as He is (to quote St. Paul's words) our Brother.

Carissimi, nunc filii Dei sumus : et nondum apparuit quid erimus. Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.

One day the lyre so cunningly compacted under the guidance of the Eternal Spirit of words and logic will be broken for ever, but will not the Divine Symphony continue? St. Paul the Apostle says that everything will fail at the last but Love,

and in the words of another master in Christianity, Love is God :

Te trina Deitas unaque poscimus,
Sic nos tu visita, sicut te colimus :
Per tuas semitas duc nos quo tendimus,
Ad lucem quam inhabitas.

Christian Mysticism, the principles of which are unmistakably asserted in the earliest writings of the Church, in the gospels of the four Evangelists, and those letters of the Apostles which time has preserved, needed for its development, retreat and silence, for, like the religion of which it is the supreme expression, it is a life rather than a theory.

A writer in the 'Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne' says with perfect theological accuracy : 'La mystique chrétienne ne consiste pas à aller à Dieu par le cœur *plûtot* que par la raison, mais à chercher Dieu par le cœur *autant* que par la raison. Le mystique n'est pas, comme on l'a pensé, un homme qui s'élève à des vérités supérieures à l'expérience ; mais, au contraire, un homme qui constate par expérience des vérités supérieures à la raison.' It was Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, above all the valley of the Nile and the Thebaid, which in the middle of the third century furnished an asylum for the seekers after communion with God.

[1] *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne.* Mars 1897. 'La Méthode Expérimentale et la Mystique Chrétienne.'

In the year 253 St. Paul, the first hermit, as he is called, fled before the persecution of Decius into the African desert, where he spent ninety years in solitary contemplation. He opened a wonderful period in Christian history, the period of the Fathers of the Desert. St. Anthony, whose life has been recorded for us by St. Athanasius, saw the aged Paul before he died and carried on his tradition, modifying it by the adaptation of its spirit to the condition of the cenobitic or community life. For Christians had rushed forth in thousands into the desert to consecrate their lives to God in perfect purity and abstraction; and their numbers no less than the intrinsic difficulties of their purpose rendered some sort of legislation necessary. This legislation the Church wisely left in the hands of those most fitted both by experience and by the insight of their intuitive genius to create and apply it. Anthony, Ammon, Palemon, to mention but three names among the great captains of the monastic warfare, gradually codified the spiritual experience of the desert into a form which was afterwards to be carried on with but little if any fundamental alteration by St. Basil in the East and by St. Benedict in the Western Church. To this day the Rule of St. Basil governs nearly all Oriental communities, and although in the West the

fertility of the Christian genius has budded into an infinite variety of expression, the Rule and the habit of St. Benedict are always with us. We English, who owe our Faith to the sons of St. Benedict, cannot but hope and pray that it may always be so.

It is a very hard thing for us who live in the modern world with its multiplicity of interest to realise the intensity of the interior life of our Christian forbears. For prayer, if not the sole, was undoubtedly the main occupation of the Fathers of the Desert. That inner world of the soul into which they retired did not consist in an otiose vacuity of mind, as we are too apt, judging from our own poverty of spirit, to think. For one thing, to those early generations, the story of the Christ was in no way dimmed by time, but was a piece of vivid and quite recent history. Mr. Pater has noted this with wonderful delicacy of touch in his account of the early Christian Mass in 'Marius the Epicurean':

'What Saint Lewis of France discerned and found so irresistibly touching, across the dimness of many centuries, as a painful thing done for love of him by one he had never seen, was to them almost as a thing of yesterday; and their hearts were whole with it. It had the force among their interests, of an almost recent event in the career of one whom their fathers' fathers might have known.'

This no doubt was much to them ; and then there was also that craving for the Divine Companionship, that longing to walk with God as a friend with a friend, that, never wholly absent from our race, seems on occasion to fire whole multitudes as individuals, and perceptibly raises masses of men a stage nearer some rarefied, quintessential life, of which its partial and intermittent success is at once the earnest and the portent.

There have been mystics in all religions, but it is the glory and, to the philosophic mind, a very cogent 'note' of the Church, that Catholicism has in all times been able to deal, as an equal, with these mysterious developments of human nature.

In other systems, putting aside philosophical schools for the moment, the mystic sooner or later becomes the heretic ; but in the Church he finds his natural home, her liturgy alternately soothes and stimulates him, her discipline braces his will to that *ascesis* without which mysticism degenerates surely into the abnormal and the insane, her dogma provides him with ballast and direction for his lightest, his most ethereal flights.

And so it was that while the age of the Fathers of the Desert passed, mysticism did not pass away from the Church.

While the anchorites were conquering the desert tracts of the soul for the interior life of those rare and chosen individuals who through the coming ages of Christendom were to follow in their steps, Christians who remained in the world were laying the foundations of the Church's social power. The expiring forces of the great pagan civilisation converged in two final attempts to destroy the new religion. These were the Decian persecution and the Neo-Platonist philosophy. Towards the close of the third century, this, the most terrible of the ten great persecutions of the Church, broke forth. Neither age nor sex could protect the disciples of Christ, and the ingenuity of experts in cruelty was taxed to discover fresh means of torture. Christians were broken on the wheel, their bodies burnt with torches, their eyes pierced with pointed reeds: and it was after these preparations that they were thrown to the beasts, flayed alive, or slowly burnt to death on red-hot iron chairs. The extent to which the persecution spread was unprecedented. In Phrygia a whole city was burnt to the ground with all its Christian inhabitants.

The martyrs no less than the anchorites were specially assisted by God in their heroic struggles. We read in the letter of the Church of Smyrna on

the martyrdom of St. Polycarp these words: 'To a great number of the martyrs the whips, the torture, and the flames seemed sweet and agreeable. They did not heave a single sigh while the blood streamed from all their limbs, while their torn and open bodies exposed their entrails, and while the people themselves could not but weep at such a spectacle. For the Lord, the Protector of souls, spoke with them, soothed their suffering, and put before their eyes the heavenly crown which should reward their patience.' The martyr Flavian asked St. Cyprian if the death-blow was very painful, and the saint replied, 'The body feels nothing when the soul is given to God.'

While the new doctrine was thus triumphing in its martyrs, the more enlightened pagans, disapproving such useless violence, were preparing a philosophical opposition to the Church. This opposition took the form of a dogmatic syncretism, which was to bind together in a unity capable of being opposed to the unity of the Catholic faith the various myths and traditions of paganism. These myths were to be understood in a philosophic and non-natural sense, and it was therefore necessary to find in antiquity a philosophical principle which should serve as a unifying basis. This principle was sought in the

writings of Pythagoras and Plato. Renan observes somewhere that the only people who do any real harm to the Church are apostates, and Ammonius Saccas, the founder of Neo-Platonism, had been a Christian. His disciple Plotinus, however, had more to do with the intellectual formation of the school Circumstances alone made him anti-Christian, and he may more fitly be considered as an independent thinker, the last indeed of the purely Greek philosophers. He practised an austere asceticism, observed celibacy, and spent much of his time in prayer and fasting. These religious practices, more or less successfully imitated by his disciples, soon developed a true mysticism among the Neo-Platonists. Porphyry, who wrote his Life, tells us that he had seen Plotinus four times united to God in ecstasy. Very remarkable, too, were the last words of the dying philosopher: 'I am trying,' he said, 'to re-unite the God who is within me to the Divinity in the universe.'

The Christian apologists endeavoured to meet this attack in two ways. Some devoted themselves to showing the flimsiness of the grounds on which the hypothesis of the Platonisers rested, while others, leaving on one side the errors of the school, endeavoured rather to bring out the elements of

truth contained in the Platonic traditions. Their burden was, that Christianity in its admirable simplicity contained all that was true in opposing systems, and that the syncretism which was being sought for, could only be solidly founded on the teaching of the Church. Among the latter were Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Synesius. But a really synthetic thinker was needed, who should be able to unite in an organic unity the elements of truth dispersed throughout pagan philosophy, and thus edify a monument which could be successfully opposed to the new Pantheon of the Platonists. This man appeared at the beginning of the fifth century. His work was mystical, for his object was to sound the depths of the Christian mysteries. He found his basis in the writings of the Old and New Testaments, interpreted by the Christian tradition, and among the inspired writers he naturally had a special preference for St. Paul the Apostle, who had been the first to discover the speculative depths of Christian dogma. St. Paul was accordingly hailed as the first initiator into the Divine illumination, and the Christian world came to think that it recognised in Denys the Areopagite, whom Paul had converted, and consecrated first bishop of Athens, the anonymous writer who gave to Christian mysticism its form and

development. Such was the origin of the books that have come down to us under the name of the Areopagite.

The writings of the pseudo-Areopagite can be divided into three parts, of which the first treats of God, considered in His essental immobility, while the second contemplates Him pouring Himself by His Providence through His creatures, and the third is concerned with creatures returning to God, their first cause and last end. In the first division may be classed the *De nominibus Divinis*: God, who, considered in the simplicity of His essence, can be called by no name, yet assumes all names, being the first cause of everything. Himself the essential goodness, He is the principle, the Beginning and the End of everything which exists; and He Himself is without beginning or end. He is the Life which gives life to everything, and yet He Himself is above all life. Considered as wisdom He is the source of all science; He is the simple and essential truth which men seek in everything, and which no creature can ever know. Considered as power and energy He is the Cause of all virtue. He is One, and he is All; He is the Principle of all unity, and all multiplicity; and that is why he can be called by all the names which are not repugnant to His Essence on condition

however, of its being recognised that in Himself He has no name at all.

The *Theologia Mystica*, on the other hand, considers creatures in their return towards God. The human soul, by an inverse movement to that of God towards the creature, rising step by step through the degrees of creation, remounts at last to God, enters the mysterious night of the Divinity, which no created light can pierce, and there unites herself intimately with her last end. These works, which succeeded in demonstrating that all the truth which the Platonist school had discovered in humanity was found in Christianity in a far purer and more perfect form, gave to mystical speculation a solid basis on which the following centuries did but continue the edifice already begun.

While the theory of Christian mysticism was being vindicated against the Alexandrian sophists, St. Benedict in Italy was giving a new impulsion to its practice. In the year 498 he had fled as a young man of eighteen the temptations of Rome, and plunged into the solitude of Subiaco. Here, in process of time companions joined him, to whom he gave his famous Rule, which, after the inspired writings, is perhaps the most remarkable document produced by Christianity. Resuming as it did the pith of the

spiritual experience of his monastic predecessors, the Rule of St. Benedict became, in less than a century after the saint's death, the almost universal code of monastic life in the West. Not only did it form contemplatives like St. Bernard and St. Hildegarde, it trained students like our own Venerable Bede, and missionaries like St. Augustine and St. Boniface.

The Benedictine Order, unlike those numerous religious institutes which are the glory of the modern Church, did not put before itself any particular work of Christian charity as its special aim. The Benedictine monk, once formed to personal holiness, undertook every duty that might present itself; so, according to circumstances, he was an evangelist, a schoolmaster, an agriculturist, but always in his interior life a mystic. Not vainly in later days did the Benedictines take '*Pax*' for their motto. A sense of peace and quiet is stamped upon all Benedictine achievement, whether we consider the writings of their doctors and theologians, or the stately abbeys and churches raised by their patient industry all over Europe, the noble ruins of which are still dotted over England, a pathetic heritage from happier days. While, as has been observed, the Benedictine spirit in no way confined itself to contemplation, the Benedictines gradually withdrew into their cloisters

as Christendom became organised. Little by little the parish priests, at first recruited from their ranks, began to be chosen almost entirely from the secular clergy, and by the end of the eleventh century, we find the Benedictines largely, if not exclusively, devoted to purely intra-claustral duties—to study, teaching, and the solemn celebration of the Divine Office.

Education, which had always been in some sense or other inseparable from missionary enterprise, had remained exclusively in their hands, and a lay as well as a clerical school was found in every abbey. While the individual monk was strictly bound to poverty, the community often became very rich through the gifts of charitable benefactors.

Some abbeys, again, enjoyed large possessions under royal charters, and their abbots exercised over their numerous dependents the feudal jurisdiction of secular nobles. It is easy to see how here and there in such circumstances the pristine simplicity of the monastic institute might suffer. An abbot might lawfully do for his community in the matter of acquiring and retaining property what as a poor monk he could not do for himself, and it might well be that in such delicate circumstances the limits of Christian duty should sometimes be overpassed.

Be this as it may, recent historical research has proved to be malicious fable on this subject much which our less critical grandfathers accepted as sober fact.

This is at all events true of English Benedictinism, and we may plausibly argue from England to other countries in which the Benedictines obtained political and social power. But—

> The old order changeth, giving place to new,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

At the end of the twelfth century Italy was ripe for a new religious manifestation. Joachim of Flora had died in the first years of the century, and had left behind him a heritage of terror. Italy was waiting for the catastrophe of antichrist which had been prophesied by the Cistercian seer, when a marvellous religious renaissance touched with a beauty that can never die the moors and valleys of Umbria.

It is not for the present writer to attempt a new portrait of St. Francis of Assisi. Among ourselves, the original biographers of the Saint, the witnesses of his simple, godlike life, cannot be bettered ; and as to others, modern students not of our fold, he would be bold indeed who should attempt to improve upon the work of Renan, Hase, and Sabatier. The

conflict between the flesh and the spirit was according to Joachim the characteristic of the second stage of humanity, the Kingdom of the Son. The 'Flesh,' embodied in nature in the waxing and waning of the seasons, in physical forces, in the spectacle of the whole beautiful universe of matter, entered at first into the Christian consciousness as the 'Enemy.' This blind genetic energy of life, expressing itself not in reason but in instinct, seemed to have for its tendency the assimilation of man to the brute; and then, too, there was a traitor within the gates, man's feeble body, which though laved in the waters of regeneration and anointed with the mystic oils of the Church, would ache at times for the simple pleasures of instinct, on which, as such, the seal of reprobation had been for ever stamped in the wounds of Christ. Small wonder that Manichæism should have been a snare to many in the early ages; and, Manichæans apart, we read of St Bernard riding a whole day along the shores of Lake Leman with downcast eyes, lest the created beauty of the scene should tempt his soul from interior contemplation. And in earlier times St. Augustine, in a well-known passage of his 'Confessions,' curses 'the light, that queen of colours,' for distracting him from prayer.

The third and final stage of man's religious

progress was, according to Joachim, to know no such harassing division of his nature; his created spirit and flesh were to find the rest of perfect equilibrium in the outpouring of the Divine Spirit; nature itself, the old enemy, was to become a means of grace.

What a marvellous fulfilment of this eternal hope of humanity was St. Francis! Truly he might have said with the modern poet:

> Let us cry, all good things
> Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul.[1]

He seems to have been little troubled with a 'sense of sin' in the abstract—considered, that is, as an offence against law. To him it was personal love rather than abstract law that had been outraged. And so penance was no hero's task of balancing the scales of infinite justice; it was the spontaneous abandonment of the soul face to face at last with her true Lover. '*Quis non amantem redamet?*' sings the Church on the Feast of the Sacred Heart. These words are the whole of Francis' religion. He troubled himself with no schemes of transcendental criminal law; he loved, and in the immensity of his awakened passion he embraced every creature that the good God in His love had made, none were too humble for him. Nature and Grace seemed indeed to have

[1] R. Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

kissed each other, as the Saint, followed by his shy woodland friends, walked to and fro, bearing the wounds of Christ; and men might be excused if they thought for a moment that the heavens indeed had opened, and that the reign of the Holy Ghost had begun on the Umbrian Highlands. It is hardly possible perhaps to exaggerate the effect produced by St. Francis upon his contemporaries. It was as if the Lord had taken pity upon His widowed Church, and had once more left His Heavenly Home on a new mission of Consolation and Redemption. Christ walked again visibly among men in the person of His servant. In that distant age the Pelagian virtues of modern times, as Father Dalgairns finely calls them, were unknown; men served Christ or Satan with a devotion to either Lord ferocious in its intensity. In Sabatier's words they possessed every virtue but measure, every vice but vulgarity. In such times, to such men the words of an absolutely pure and consistent idealist were wholly convincing. The emotional possibilities of the illimitable sanctity to which such a prophet urged his hearers, were readily understood by men familiar with those of unlimited vice; as in the Gospel allegory, the 'first and the last' became interchangeable terms. And perhaps there never was so pure and consistent an

idealist as St. Francis. His nights were spent in prayer, but his life was the life of a man of action. Everything to him was good, both society and nature. His soul went out with a burst of tenderness and a word of blessing to everything that lives, even to the lowliest animals. The characteristic of his temperament was an inalterable gaiety, and we should rather imagine him as his first disciples described him, with his bright dark eyes, his open and smiling countenance, his gay and easy carriage, than with the emaciated face and the lugubrious aspect which characterise him in the tradition of the Spanish painters.

He was born in 1182, and belonged to the privileged class of the burgesses of Assisi, then very flourishing through its commercial relations with the neighbouring cities. His father, Bernardone, was a cloth merchant of great wealth, and the young Francis spent his father's florins with generous hand. He would serenade the Umbrian moon through the streets of Assisi, at the head of a troop of festive companions. It was the moment when the Provençal civilisation was beginning to penetrate by means of errant troubadours the northern towns of Italy. Francis appears to have fed his mind on

the fables and romances of French chivalry, and is said to have told his friends about this time that he would one day be a great baron.

But the optimism of pleasure was in time to give place to the idealism of love—of love awakened by pity. Francis became gradually aware of the core of suffering in this brilliant, beautiful world. The narrow egotism of his fellow-citizens ; the human misery that he met at every turn of the street ; the starving beggars who crowded the doors of the churches while the altars of Christ within shone with gold and silver ; the hideous lepers who moaned and wandered, uncared for, in wild places outside the city gate—such impressions as these under the smiling Italian sky, in the midst of the vine-clad plain of Umbria where life, liberty, and joy seemed the natural gift of Heaven to earth, presented his fellow-man to Francis as a miserable, disinherited wretch, the one jarring note in the universal harmony. Under the influence of these new preoccupations his nights began to be given more and more exclusively to prayer, and it was in that nocturnal wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, that the sinew of his thigh shrank under the Divine touch. A higher and more alluring ideal than that of the Provençal poets

dawned on his imagination, Christ appeared to him the true captain of romance:

> Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once;
> And he that might the vantage best have took
> Found out the remedy.

The supreme abnegation, the all-embracing love of the Cross fired his heart and brain to apply that remedy which Christ had found. Francis put off his bravery, and devoted himself to tending the lepers' sores. The Franciscan movement was begun. Of the growth of that movement, of the foundation of the two regular orders of friars and nuns, it is not my intention here to speak. Thousands left the world to follow Francis, to preach his gospel of love and pity. But there were many others who, although prevented by circumstances from abandoning their ordinary duties, were no less fired by the Franciscan spirit. Such persons remaining in the world, formed a vast society known as the Third Order, and it is to this Third Order that some of the most illustrious Franciscans have belonged. St. Lewis of France, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Charles Borromeo, are among its illustrations. It flourishes in our midst to-day. Years after the death of St. Francis, Tertiaries began to gather into communities which only differed by the nature of their engagements

from the regular communities of friars and nuns. In early days, also, many persons retired independently of any canonical organisation into solitude, and there lived in the practice of the Franciscan Rule as hermits of the Third Order. Again, two or three might live together doing works of penance. Of this latter class of Tertiary hermits was Blessed Angela of Foligno. The story of her conversion is remarkable, and singularly consoling. A married woman, she had lived for years an irregular life, and being touched by grace, she suddenly made up her mind to go to confession. But when she came to the point her courage failed her, and she felt unable to mention the more grievous of her sins. She then communicated, thus adding sacrilege to her other faults. In this state she seems to have passed some time tortured by remorse, and at length invoked the assistance of St. Francis, and the next night the saint appeared to her. 'My sister,' said he, 'if you had called on me sooner I should have granted your prayer before this.' On going the next morning to Mass she heard a stranger preaching, and understood by an interior light that he was the confessor that Providence had destined for her, and after Mass she made to him a full confession of her sins. Then commenced the trials of purification. The reader

will find them wonderfully detailed in the naïve language of the saint herself in the 'Eighteen Spiritual Steps.' The slowness and difficulty with which she advanced towards God (she tells us herself that she spent many years in these painful stages of purification), provide a singular commentary on those works of modern spirituality which appear to teach, or at least to imply, that to acquire perfection is the work of a few days. Such was not Angela's experience. She was a simple Franciscan soul, with no theories, but with an astonishing faculty for self-observation, and yet no one was ever less morbid. In those of her writings which I have collected here, her soul may be studied in each of its stages, from the state of sin up to that of the astonishing sanctity which she attained. The value of this piece of Christian psychology is, I venture to think, enhanced by the fact that Angela does not appear by any means to have been a remarkable person in the natural order. She appears to have been a commonplace, frivolous, sinful young woman, and with the hesitation of character inherent to weak natures, even when touched by grace, was incapable at first of a sincere conversion. That in spite of all this she should have attained eventually to such consummate holiness is certainly matter of great consolation. Of the facts

of her life apart from those narrated in the following pages by herself and her confessor Arnold, we know nothing. History has not even preserved the date of her birth. The following translations have been made from the Latin edition of her works dedicated to Cardinal Francesco Maria Casino, and published at Foligno in 1714. The text has, however, been carefully compared with that given by the Bollandists. Her Office is celebrated in the Franciscan family on March 30.

PART I

OF THE CONVERSION OF BLESSED ANGELA

A SINGLE CHAPTER RELATING HER EIGHTEEN SPIRITUAL STEPS

In my progress towards the road of penance, says Angela of Foligno, *I travelled by eighteen spiritual steps, before I knew the imperfection of my life.*

THE FIRST STEP

THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

Beginning at first to reflect on my sins, I attained to the knowledge of them: and at this knowledge my soul feared greatly, lest she should be damned in Hell, which caused me to weep bitterly.

THE SECOND STEP

THE SHAME OF CONFESSION

In the second place I began to blush for my sins and so great was my confusion that for shame I

could not confess them. Wherefore many times, being unconfessed, I went to Communion, and in my sins received the Body of the Lord. Day and night, on this account, was I reproved by my conscience, by reason of which I implored the Blessed Francis to grant me the grace of finding a suitable confessor, who would truly understand my sins, and to whom I could rightly confess them. So, that very night, an old man appeared to me and said: 'Sister, hadst thou asked me sooner I should the sooner have heard thy prayer; as it is, what thou hast asked is done.' In the morning, therefore, while I was on my way to the Church of St. Francis, I found, preaching in the Church of St. Felician, a friar who was a true Chaplain of Christ, filled with His power, and as soon as the sermon was over, I made up my mind to confess to him. I made a complete confession of my sins and received absolution. In this confession, however, I felt no love, only bitterness, shame, and grief.

THE THIRD STEP

SATISFACTION

In the third and next place, I persevered in the performance of the satisfaction and penance imposed

on me, and yet still remained full of grief and without any consolation.

THE FOURTH STEP

THE CONSIDERATION OF THE MERCY OF GOD

In the fourth place, I began to contemplate and learn the mercy of God, which had extended to me the aforesaid grace, and had drawn me out of Hell. By this contemplation I began to be enlightened, and now wept and grieved more bitterly than before, and I applied myself to severer penance, of which I speak not here.

THE FIFTH STEP

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Fifthly: being thus illuminated, and seeing nothing in myself but defects, I condemned myself, knowing and perceiving most certainly that I was worthy of Hell, from which knowledge I received a still more bitter sorrow. And I would have you understand that between these 'steps' I have mentioned a certain time elapsed. Wherefore we should have great pity and sorrow of heart for the soul who moves so slowly and with such grief, going to God so heavily and making such slight advance. As

for me, I know that I delayed at each step, and wept, not having the grace to advance at the time, although it was a certain consolation to me to weep at each step: truly a bitter consolation.

THE SIXTH STEP

THE ILLUMINATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN

When I passed the sixth and next step I received a certain illumination of grace by which was conferred on me a profound knowledge of all my sins, and I began to see that by offending God I had also offended all creatures made for me, and from the depths of my soul my sins were all brought back into my memory: and I deeply pondered them in the confession which I made. And I invoked all the Saints and the Blessed Virgin that they would intercede for me, and beg the merciful Lord, who had conferred such great benefits on me, to have mercy on me, and, since I knew myself to be dead in sins, to cause me to live again, reviving me by His grace. And I begged all creatures, all of whom I saw myself to have offended (inasmuch as I had offended their Creator), not to accuse me before God. And it seemed to me that all creatures had pity on

me, and also all Saints; and then the grace was given me of praying to God with a great fire of love more abundantly than I had ever been wont to.

THE SEVENTH STEP

THE SIGHT OF THE CROSS

Seventhly, was given to me the special grace of gazing on the Cross, on which with the eyes of the heart and of the body I beheld Jesus Christ dead for us: but this vision and contemplation were, as yet, insipid to me, though I conceived a great grief by means of them.

THE EIGHTH STEP

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CAUSE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Eighthly, there was given me, while gazing on the Cross, a further knowledge of how Christ had died for our sins; and then I recognised all my own sins, and realised that I had crucified Him. But I did not yet know of what great benefit the Passion of Christ had been to me, nor did I then understand, so profoundly as afterwards, how He had withdrawn me from sin and converted me to penance and died for

me. Nevertheless, in the knowledge of the Cross that I then had, I received such a fire of love and compunction, that standing by the Cross I stripped myself, in resolution, of everything, and offered Him my whole self; then it was too, though with trembling, that I promised Him to observe perpetual chastity, and not offend Him with any of my members, accusing all my members in turn of their past deeds. And I implored Him to give me the grace of observing this promise of chastity, and the guarding of all my senses, for, on the one hand, I feared to promise these things, and, on the other, the aforesaid fire of love urged me so that I could not do otherwise.

THE NINTH STEP

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Afterwards was given me, in the ninth place, a desire to seek the Way of the Cross, that I might stand at its foot and find the refuge to which all sinners fly. And I was illuminated and instructed, and the Way of the Cross was made known to me in the following manner. For it was revealed to me that if I wished to go to the Cross, I should strip myself so as to travel thither more lightly and more freely; in other words, that I should forgive all who

had offended me, and that I should strip myself of all earthly things, of all men and women, friends and relations, and of my possessions and of my very self, and give my heart to Christ who had conferred on me such great benefits as I have mentioned, and thus walk over a road of thorns, a road, that is, of tribulation. And so I began to give up good clothes and dresses and delicate food, and also head-dresses. But as yet this was a cause of shame and suffering to me, because I did not feel much the love of God, and I was living with my husband, so that it was bitter to me when I heard or sustained any injury; I suffered, however, as patiently as I could. Now it happened at that time by the will of God that my mother died, who was a great impediment to me in the way of the Lord, and my husband also died, and all my sons in a short space of time. And because I had commenced the aforesaid Road of the Cross and had begged God to deliver me from them, I received a great consolation from their death, although I suffered somewhat with them in their death, yet I thought that henceforward, as God had granted me this grace, my heart would for ever be in His Heart and Will, and the Will and Heart of God in my heart.

THE TENTH STEP

THE APPARITION OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

In the tenth place, when I inquired of God what I could do to be more pleasing to Him, He, in His kindness, appeared several times to me both sleeping and watching, crucified on the Cross, and bid me gaze into His wounds, and showed me in a wonderful way how He had endured all for me; and this happened several times. And when He was showing me all the sufferings one by one that He had endured for me He would say to me: 'What then canst thou do for me that shall suffice?' Also He appeared to me many times watching, though less pleasingly to me than while I slept, although He always appeared to me in great pain and sorrow. And he showed me the sufferings of His Head and, in particular, the Hair torn out of His Eyebrows and Beard and enumerated all the scourgings that had been inflicted on Him, assigning each to the part of His Body where He had endured them, and said to me: 'All this I endured for thee.' And then were brought back into my memory all my sins, and it was shown me how, by my own sins, I had again struck Christ Jesus, and what great grief I ought to have; and then indeed I experienced a greater grief for my sins than ever I

had had before, and, showing me His Passion, He would say: 'What canst thou do for me that shall suffice?' And then I groaned heavily and wept so ardently that my tears burnt my flesh to such an extent that I had to apply cold water for refreshment.

THE ELEVENTH STEP

THE SEVERITY OF HER PENANCE AND HER FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD

In the eleventh place I determined, on account of my sins, to perform a severer penance, which I imagined and endeavoured to perform and of which I cannot here speak, and, as it did not appear to me that I could do sufficient penance amid the circumstances of the world, I determined to completely abandon everything so as to be able to do penance and come to the Cross as had been inspired me by God. Now this determination was granted me by the grace of God, in the following marvellous manner. For, when I vehemently desired to become poor, I would frequently think, with much anxiety, that I might perchance die before I should have arrived at poverty, and, on the other hand, I would be assaulted by many temptations: as, for instance,

that I was young and that, for that reason, begging might be a great danger and a shame to me. It would also be suggested to me that, if I did this, I should have to die of hunger, of cold, and nakedness, and that, moreover, all my friends would dissuade me from it. At length, by the mercy of God, my heart was enlightened, and with that illumination, there came to me such a fixity of purpose that I did not then think, nor do I now think, that I can ever lose it for all eternity, and I disposed and determined myself that if it were necessary for me to die of hunger, or nakedness, or shame, if that pleased or could please God, I would in no way, on account of those possibilities, give up my purpose, even if I were certain that all those evils I have mentioned would occur to me, because, even if they all occurred, I should be dying for God's sake of my own will, and then it was that I really took the determination which has been mentioned.

TWELFTH STEP

THE MEMORY OF THE PASSION

My next and twelfth step was that I begged the Blessed Mother of Christ and St. John the Evangelist by the grief which they had endured that they would

obtain for me a certain sign by which I might always keep in memory the Passion of Christ.

THE THIRTEENTH STEP.

THE SHOWING OF THE HEART OF CHRIST

In the thirteenth place, persevering in this prayer and desire, I fell into a dream in which the Heart of Christ was shown me and it was said to me: 'In this heart there is no falsehood, but all things there are true.'

And it appeared that this happened to me because I had ridiculed a certain preacher.

THE FOURTEENTH STEP

A CLEARER KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

The fourteenth step was on this wise. Once when I was standing in prayer, Christ showed Himself to me watching, more clearly, and gave me greater knowledge of Himself, and then called me to Him and bid me place my mouth on the wound of His side, and it seemed to me that I did so, and that I drank His blood flowing freshly out of His side, and it was given me to understand that in that blood He would wash

me. And at this point I began to receive great consolation, although the consideration of the Passion caused me sadness, and I asked the Lord that He would make me to shed and pour out all my blood for His love's sake as He had done for me, and I desired, for the sake of His love, that all my limbs should be afflicted and should suffer a vile and more bitter death than His Passion, and I took thought and desired to find someone to kill me, so long as I should suffer for His faith or for His love, and I thought that I would beg Him to grant me this grace, namely that as Christ was crucified on a tree He should crucify me on a river bank or in some very vile way. And, because I was not worthy to die as the holy martyrs had died, I desired to die a viler and more bitter death, and I could not think of a death vile enough for my desire, which should be altogether unlike the death of the saints, for of their death I deemed myself altogether unworthy.

THE FIFTEENTH STEP

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GRIEF OF CHRIST'S PASSION

In the fifteenth place, I began to fix my desire on the Virgin Mother of God and on St. John, dwelling

on the thought of them in my memory, and begging them, by the grief which they endured at the Lord's Passion, to obtain for me the grace always to feel the sorrow of Christ's passion, or, at least, the sorrow that they had endured ; and they obtained for me, by their prayers, this grace, and once St John obtained for me so great a grief that it was among the greatest I had ever felt. And it was given to me to understand that St. John had suffered such grief at the passion and death of Christ, and at the grief of the Mother of Christ, that I thought, and still think, that he was more than martyr. But this time was given me a desire of expropriating myself with my whole will, and although I was much assaulted by the Devil, and frequently tempted not to do so, and was prevented having communication with the friars minor, and with all from whom it was fitting for me to take counsel, on no account, whatever good or evil things might have happened to me, could I have abstained from devoting all my goods to the poor, and, even if I should not have been able to do this, from at least stripping myself completely of them all. For it did not seem to me that I could keep anything without gravely offending Him who had so enlightened me. However, I still remained in bitterness on account of my sins, and did not know whether what I was doing was

pleasing to God, but, with bitter groaning, I cried to Him saying: 'Lord, even if I am damned, I will nevertheless do penance and will strip myself of everything and serve Thee.' And while I was still in bitterness on account of my sins, and did not yet feel any divine sweetness, the state of my soul was changed in the following way.

THE SIXTEENTH STEP

HER CONSOLATION IN READING THE PATERNOSTER

My sixteenth step was on an occasion when I had come to Church and was praying God to grant me a certain grace. And while I was praying, and saying the *Paternoster*, God placed the *Paternoster* itself in my heart with such clearness and such an understanding of the divine goodness and my own unworthiness, that I cannot express it. The prayer was expounded to me in my heart, word by word, and I said it very slowly, with contrition and with compunction, so that, although on one hand I was weeping for my sins and my unworthiness, which I there recognised, I yet had great consolation and began to taste somewhat of the Divine sweetness, for, in the *Paternoster*, I began to learn better the

Divine goodness than in any other thing, and to this day I still find it better there than elsewhere. Moreover, inasmuch as my sins and unworthiness were shown to me in that *Paternoster*, I began to be so ashamed of them that I did not dare lift my eyes to heaven, or to the crucifix, or to anything else, but I recommended myself to the Blessed Virgin that she should obtain for me grace and pardon for my sins, while I myself still remained in bitterness on account of them. Oh, sinners, how heavily does the soul go forth to penance! for her feet are so strongly fettered, and she has such evil counsellors who are indeed but obstacles, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Know, moreover, that in all these steps that I have mentioned I delayed for a good time before I could move to the next, but in some I waited longer time, in others, less.

THE SEVENTEENTH STEP

SHE OBTAINS A GREATER FAITH THROUGH THE BLESSED VIRGIN

In the seventeenth step, it was shown me that the Blessed Virgin had obtained for me a grace by which she gave me a more than human faith, for it seemed to me, up to that time, that my faith had

been, as it were, dead in comparison with that which she obtained for me, and that my tears had before been scanty in comparison with those which I afterwards had. For, afterwards, I grieved over the Passion of Christ, and the sorrows of His mother, and what I had done before, however great it may have been, seemed to me as nothing; and I wished to do greater penance, and I enclosed my heart in the Passion of Christ, and hope was given me that, in that Passion, I might become free. And now I began to receive consolation in dreams, and I had beautiful dreams, and I began to receive sweetness and consolation from God, both in my soul, and in my body continuously, both waking and sleeping. But because I did not yet enjoy a perfect certitude, my pleasure was mingled with bitterness, nor did my heart yet rest, for I desired something else as well as God.

AN ADDITION FROM THE MS. OF ARNOLD THE AUTHOR

She told me one out of many of these dreams and visions, saying, On one time, while I was in the dungeon in which I had shut myself up for the greater Lent, and was exercising myself in love, and in meditation on one word of the Gospel, which was of great condescension and charity, being near a

book, which happened to be a missal, and, desiring to see that word written so much that I could hardly restrain myself from opening the book with my hands, I was overcome by sleep and, being led away in vision, it was said to me that the understanding of that particular epistle is so delightful a thing that, if one truly understood it, one would forget all earthly things, and he who was leading me said to me: Wouldst thou prove this? And when I agreed and desired to prove it, he gave me straightway the proof. And I then understood so clearly the goods of God that I forthwith forgot all earthly things. And he who was leading me said again to me, that the understanding of the Gospel was so delightful a thing that if one understood it, one would forget not only all earthly things, but also oneself. And he made me prove this too, and I forthwith understood the goods of God with such delight, that I besought of him who was leading me that I might never fall from that state. But he replied that my petition could not yet be granted, and straightway led me back, and I opened my eyes and felt a great joy in those things which I had seen, though I bitterly grieved at having lost them. And it still delights me much to recall them, and from that moment so great a certitude and light and

ardour of the love of God has been mine, that I can confidently assert that nothing is ever preached about the love of God, and that those who try to preach about it cannot do so, for they do not understand the words they use. So indeed had he said to me who led me away in vision.

THE EIGHTEENTH STEP

ARDOUR AND ASSIDUITY IN PRAYER

In the eighteenth step I began to have such a sentiment of God, and such delight in prayer that I would forget to eat, and I used to desire that eating were unnecessary, in order that I might remain in prayer, and, with this feeling, was mingled the temptation not to eat, or, if I did, to eat as little as possible; but I knew that this was a delusion. And there was such a fire of love in my heart that I was not wearied by kneeling or by any other penance. Afterwards indeed I attained to a greater fire and fervour of love of the Divine Charity. For, if I heard anyone speaking of God, I would groan, and I could not have refrained from doing so, even if anyone had stood over me with an axe to slay me. This happened to me, for the first time, when I sold my farm in order to give the money to the poor, for it was the best

piece of land I had. And formerly I used to make fun of Petruccio, but afterwards I could in no way do so. Frequently also whenever I heard anyone speak about God I would groan even when in company. And, when people would say to me that I was possessed on account of what happened to me, I would admit that I was sick and out of myself, and unable to do otherwise; yet I could not, by this admission, content my enemies, but was put to great shame by them. And when I saw a picture of the Passion of Christ I could hardly hold myself together but would fall into a fever, so that my companion began to hide from me pictures of the Passion as much as she could, so that I might not see them. In this time of groaning I had many illuminations, emotions, visions, and consolations, some of which will be related further on.

PART II

OF THE PROGRESS OF BLESSED ANGELA

CHAPTER I

OF HER VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS

LEST I should be exalted and set up by the multitude and magnitude of the visions which were vouchsafed to me, I was given a manifold tempter, by whom I suffered, in the body as well as in the soul, many temptations and trials. Indeed I think it is hardly possible to describe the infirmities and passions of my body, for I have not a single member which does not suffer horribly, and the innumerable torments which I undergo are increased by many devils. For never am I free from pain, infirmities, and weariness, and I am so weak and fragile that I am constantly obliged to lie down, and I have no member which is not struck, tortured, and punished by the devils. So ill am I always, and my limbs so swollen and painful,

that I can only move with great pain, and lying down causes me great weariness, and I am not able to eat sufficiently. But, from the very same devils, I undergo torments and passions of the soul almost continually, and these latter I declare to be incomparably more numerous and severe than those of the body. I can think of no other similitude to describe them than that of the state of a man, who is hanged with a rope by the neck, whose hands are tied behind his back, and his eyes bound, and who is left, still living upon the gibbet, without help and support and without the smallest remedy. I say that the tortures I endure from the devils are more desperate and cruel than these. I see my soul hanging in like manner, with no support, and all her strength overthrown by the devils, and yet with knowledge and consideration left to her. And so great is the dolour of the soul, when she sees all her strength overthrown and fallen and her inability to oppose herself to herself, that, at times, I can hardly weep for despairing sorrow and anger, and again, at other times, I weep inconsolably. Sometimes even I can scarcely restrain myself from tearing myself to pieces, so great is my anger ; and at other times I cannot help striking myself so horribly that swellings are produced on my head and limbs. And the soul, seeing all her strength fall and depart

from her, groans, and I call almost unceasingly to my God: 'My God, my God, forsake me not!'

Yet another torment I endured, which was caused by the renewal, within me, of all the vices. Not in such a manner as to subject my reason durably, but in a way to cause me great suffering. And vices which had never been in my body came to me and burned me, bringing me to great suffering. These, however, had not a continued life and their death brought me great consolation. And I perceived that I had been given over to many devils, who caused dead vices, which I had abhorred, to revive in me, and who had added many which had never existed. And I, remembering that God, when here, was afflicted, despised, and poor, wished that, were it necessary, my troubles might be doubled.

And when I am in the most horrible darkness of the devils, wherein all hope of good is utterly lacking, then those vices arise in my body, which, in my innermost soul, I know to be dead, and are awakened only by the devils, who also arouse others that never existed. In the body I suffer in at least three parts, and at times so great is the fire of concupiscence that, until my confessor forbade me, I was wont to apply material fire to extinguish the other. When I find myself in that darkness I verily believe that,

could I choose, I would rather be roasted alive than remain in it, yea, I cry and call for death, no matter in what way God should bestow it upon me, and I say to Him : ' O Lord, if Thou must put me in Hell, delay not, but do it at once, and, inasmuch as Thou hast deserted me, finish, and plunge me into the depth !' I know that all this is the work of the devils, and that those vices have no life in the soul, because she does not consent to them, and that the body suffers violence ; but, were it to continue, the body could not endure it, so weary and full of pain is it. And the soul perceives that all her strength is taken from her, and, although she does not consent to the vices, yet she has not complete power to resist them, and then she sees herself to be against God, and so she falls and is tortured by the devils. And a certain vice, greater than all the others, which had never been mine, is permitted by God to come to me, and I know clearly that it is permitted by God. And, against the said vice, God gives me a certain strength, by which I am delivered. And had I not, apart from this, an assured faith in God, by this token alone, I should have a certain and sure hope, which it would be impossible to doubt. And that strength always prevails against the vice, and holds me, and does not permit me to fall, and so great is its power that it

not only holds me, but gives me so great a force of strength, that, in it, I know God, and am so illuminated and confirmed, that all the men in the world, and all the Devils in Hell, and all things that are, could not move me to the smallest sin ; and, with this strength, there remains to me faith in God. And so great is that vice that I am ashamed to speak of it, and it seems to me that, were the aforesaid strength taken away from me, there is nothing, neither shame nor punishment, which could hold me back from rushing straightway into sin. But that strength intervenes and delivers me manfully, so that neither for all the world nor all the evil could I sin. And these labours I endured for two years and more.

Within my soul a certain pride and a certain humility were wont to struggle most tediously. The cause of the humility is the sight of myself, fallen from all good and outside all strength and all grace, and full of such a multitude of sins and defects, that it is impossible to think that God still wishes to have mercy upon me. And I see that I am the home of the Devil, and the servant and the daughter of the demons, outside all rectitude and veracity, and worthy of the lowest depth of Hell. And this humility which I describe is not such as I have had at other times, which brought content to my soul, and led her

to reflect upon Divine goodness, but it is a humility which brings me nothing but innumerable ills. And in my soul I see myself to be surrounded by demons and full of defects in soul and body, and with no power of remembering God, for on every side He is closed to me, and grace taken from me, and it is His will that I should have no memory of Him. The sight of my own damnation does not cause me any care, so much greater is my care and grief at having offended my Creator, whom for all the good and evil which can be named I would not have offended nor offend. Wherefore, seeing my aforesaid innumerable offences, I fight with all my members against the demons, that I may conquer them and prevail against the aforesaid vices, which I can by no means do completely ; for I can find no ford nor opening by which I can escape, nor any escape nor any remedy to help me, and I meditate upon the depth of my fall.

Wherefore, being frequently plunged into depths of humility, I see my sins and the superabundance of my wickednesses and iniquities, yet I see no way by which I can make them manifest and discover all their hypocrisy. I would like to go through the cities and plains and hang meat and fish about my neck saying: 'Here is that most vile woman, full of evil and deceit, sower of all vices and ills!'

For I did well for the glory of men, and I replied to persons who invited us, that I ate neither fish nor meat, when I was, all the time, full of gormandising, gluttony, and drunkenness, and making a parade of taking only what was necessary. I was eager to be poor exteriorly, and when I lay down I had many coverings, which in the morning I caused to be taken away, lest persons coming by should remark upon them. See the devil of my soul and the malice of my heart! Listen to my hypocrisy, and learn that I am the daughter of pride, a deceiver and the abomination of God! For I seemed to be the daughter of prayer, while I was the daughter of anger, pride, and the Devil, and while I seemed to have God in my soul, and in my cell divine consolation, I had really the Devil in both soul and cell. And know, also, that the whole time of my life, I was eager to have the fame of holiness, and that, in truth, on account of the hidden malice and deceit of my heart, I deceived many people and am the murderer of many souls and of my own.

And afterwards, being in this abyss, I turned to those my brethren who are called my sons, and I said to them: 'Be unwilling to believe in me any more: see ye not that I am a demoniac? Do ye, who are called sons, implore of God this justice, that the

demons may depart from my soul, and that my worthless deeds may be made manifest, so that God may be no longer abused through me. And see ye not that all I say to you is false, and see ye not that were there no malice in the world I, out of my abundance, could fill it? Be unwilling to believe any more in me! Be unwilling to adore any more this idol, for therein is hidden the Devil, and all the words that I have spoken to you were diabolical and deceitful. I implore the justice of God, that this idol may fall and be broken, and that her gilded and tinselled words and her diabolical works may be made manifest. For, in order that I might be honoured instead of God, I gilded myself with divine words. I implore that the Devil may depart from this idol, and that the world may be no longer deceived by this woman. Wherefore I beseech the Son of God, whom I dare not name, that if He will not make me manifest through Himself, that He will do it through the earth, that it may open and swallow me up, and so I shall be an example, and men and women will say: 'Oh, how she was gilded and covered with tinsel! and how entirely deceitful within and without!' I would like to have a chain about my neck instead of any decoration, and to be dragged through cities and plains, and I would like

the boys who lead me to say: 'This is that most vile woman who, all her life, showed false for true!' And I would like the men and women to say: 'Oh, behold the miracle that God has done! For He has caused the malice, iniquities, and sins which were hidden the whole time of her life to be made manifest and to be told by herself.' But, were all this said, it would scarcely satisfy the soul: and know, that though I was in a desperate state, I never despaired to such an extent as to despair of God and His goodness, and I made a compact between Him and me. And yet I was certain that there was no person in the world so full of malice and damnation as I was, and that God permitted whatever He gave to me and bestowed upon me for my greater despair and damnation. Wherefore I beseech you all to implore the justice of God that He may not delay to extract the Devil from this idol and make manifest her most worthless deeds, for, because I cannot make manifest my malice and the lies of my soul, my head is splitting, my body fails, and my eyes are becoming blinded through the multitude of my tears, and all my bones are out of joint. But I rejoice because, in part, my malice begins to be made manifest. And I perceived that all these things which I have described were without true humility. And know, thou, who

writest, that, in comparison with all my sins, iniquities and false use of words, thou writest too poorly, for when I was little I began to work iniquity. These and other similar things I am obliged to say, plunged and sunk into the aforesaid humility.

After these things came pride, for I wrought all anger, pride, and sadness, and I was most bitter and puffed up. And from the good which God did to me I received great bitterness, not being mindful of it as a means of assistance, but of injury and painful amazement. It was easy to see that in me there could be no virtue, and verily I doubt whether there ever was any, and indeed, I see no reason why God should permit there to be any. In this temptation I am so completely possessed by anger and pride, and am so bitter and puffed up, that all good is closed to me and hidden from me, and my pain and grief are greater than I can say. For, unless God Himself should change me altogether, or work quite differently in my soul, it would not console me, nor do me any good, were all the wise men of the world and all the saints of Paradise to speak words of consolation to me, and to promise me every good thing which they could name, and which God Himself should give me. Indeed I should not believe them, for they would increase my trouble and sorrow, and would cause me greater anger, amazement, and sorrow and pain than

I can say. Wherefore I would cheerfully choose and willingly suffer every evil, infirmity, and human bodily pain for a commutation of the aforesaid torments if God would take them away from me. And I oftentimes said that any kind of torture would be preferable and, I verily believe, a lesser evil than the aforesaid torments. And the aforesaid state of torment began, in some degree, before the pontificate of Pope Celestinus and lasted for more than two years, during which time I was often tormented, and to this day I am not wholly cured, although I only suffer now for short periods, exteriorly and not interiorly. But since I was in this state, I know that great purging and purification of soul accompany the aforesaid evil humility and pride. For by them I acquire that true humility without which no one can be saved. And between the aforesaid humility and pride my soul is consumed and tortured. And the greater the humility, the greater is the purification of soul. And, through the knowledge of her offences and defects, which the soul obtains through the aforesaid humility, she is purged of pride and the devils, and therefore the more she is levelled and impoverished, and the lower she is humiliated, so much the more purged and purified she is, and ready to rise, for she can only rise inasmuch as she is humiliated, levelled, and impoverished.

PART III

OF HER MANIFOLD VISIONS AND CONSOLATIONS

CHAPTER I

VISION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH A HE IS SUPREME GOODNESS

BLESSED be God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who consoles us in all our tribulations, and who has deigned to console me a sinner in every tribulation. Now after that striking time of which mention is made in the Eighteenth Step of my conversion, and that marvellous illumination which I received whilst saying the Lord's Prayer, I experienced a great consolation of the sweetness of God in this way. I was inspired to a consideration of the blessed union of the Deity and the Humanity of Christ, and of the Divinity and Humanity in Christ. And I felt a greater consolation and pleasure in this meditation

than I had ever felt before, so great, indeed, that I stood in my cell for the greater part of those days, shut in and alone, and I prayed, as it were, stupefied. And so greatly was my heart affected by the delight of that meditation that I at length lay down and lost speech. And my companion came in to me, and thought I was dying, but she was an impediment to me and wearied me.

Whilst I continued in this state, and was praying late one evening in my cell, it seemed to me as if I felt nothing of God, and I lamented thereat, and cried, saying: 'O Lord, that which I do, I only do to find Thee! Therefore shall I find Thee when I have completed these things?' (For I had not, at that time, completely bequeathed all my possessions to the poor, although there remained but little to be done.) And I said in prayer many similar things. And He replied to me thus: 'What desirest thou?' I replied: 'I want not gold nor silver, and if Thou gavest me the whole world, I would still desire nothing but Thee!' And He replied, saying: 'Strive diligently, and prepare thyself, for after thou hast finished doing that which thou hast commenced, the whole Trinity will come to thee.' And He promised me many other things, and, having drawn me out of much tribulation, He dismissed me with great divine

sweetness. And then I expectantly awaited the performance of those things which had been promised to me. And, although I had been left with so much divine sweetness, I related what had been said to me in my great vision, and the promises which had been made to me, to my companion, with some hesitation. After these things I went to the Church of St. Francis at Assisi, and, while on the way there, I received the fulfilment of the aforesaid promise, notwithstanding that I had not completely bequeathed all my goods to the poor, because a certain holy man who was to have done this for me had died, and so had not been able to bring it to an end. (This man had been converted, by the grace of God, at my admonitions, and had died while he was in the act of hastening to bestow all his own possessions upon the poor. And, though he had not been able to carry out his intentions, God did great miracles through him, and his sepulchre is held in reverence.) While, then, I went towards the Church of St. Francis at Assisi, praying as I went (and amongst other things I besought Blessed Francis himself to ask of God to make me observe well the Rule of Blessed Francis, to which I had lately vowed myself, and to acquire for me the grace of feeling something of Christ, and, most particularly, to make me live and

end my days in poverty, for which latter end—namely, that I might have the liberty of poverty—I went to Rome in order to beseech Blessed Peter himself to obtain for me this grace, which he did ; and, through his merits and those of Blessed Francis, and through Divine grace, I obtained, in an unmistakable way, the gift of true poverty), I arrived at that part of the road between Spello and the narrow way which ascends to Assisi, and in that place the following words were said to me : ' Thou beseechest My servant Francis, but I will send thee another messenger. And I am the Holy Spirit, who come to thee to give thee consolation such as thou hast never before tasted. And I will accompany thee, within thee, all the way to the Church of St. Francis, and few will think whom thou hast with thee, and the whole of the way I will talk with thee without ceasing, and thou shalt not be able to hear aught else but Me, for I have bound thee, and until thou comest the second time to the Church of St. Francis, I will not desert thee if thou love Me.' And in order to provoke me to love Him, He began to say the following words to me : ' My daughter, sweet to Me, My daughter, My temple, My daughter, My delight, love Me, for the more thou lovest Me, the more art thou loved by Me ! ' And He said to me most frequently : ' Daughter and spouse,

sweet to Me!' And he added: 'I love thee more than any other soul in the Spoletan valley. Wherefore since I have set Myself up in thee, and rested in thee, set thyself up and rest in Me. I was with the Apostles and they saw Me with their corporal eyes, but they felt Me not as thou feelest Me. Moreover, after thou hast returned home, I shall not speak to thee as I do now, but thou shalt feel Me, and thou shalt feel such sweetness as thou hast never before experienced. Thou prayest to My servant Francis, hoping to obtain through him that which thou desirest, and, because My servant Francis loved Me much, I did much for him, and if, to-day, there were any person who loved Me more I would do more for him.' He said moreover that there were few good people now and little faith, and He lamented, saying: 'So great is the love which I bear towards a soul who loves without malice, that, were there one now who loved Me perfectly, I would bestow upon her greater grace than I have bestowed in former times upon the saints of whom are related such great things done by grace. And no one can be excused from this love, for every person can love God, and He requires from the soul naught else but to love Him, and He truly loved the soul, and is Himself the Love of the soul. And these words

are very profound.' And He proved to me that God is the Love of the soul by His Advent and His Cross, which He endured for us, so immense and glorious was His Love! And He explained the Passion to me, and added: 'See if there is aught else in Me but love!' And my soul comprehended with great certainty that He was naught else but love. And He lamented that, in these days He could find so few persons in whom He could place His grace, and He told me that, if He could find any persons loving Him now, He would bestow greater graces upon them than He had upon the saints of former times. And He began anew to me: 'My daughter, sweet to Me, love Me, for thou art more greatly loved than thou lovest Me. My beloved, love Me; immense is My love for the soul who loves Me without malice.' And I understood that He desired the soul to love Him, with that same love with which He loved the soul, according to her power and strength, and that, according to her desire, so would He fill her up. Again He said to me: 'My beloved, My spouse, love Me, all that thou doest pleases Me—when thou eatest, when thou drinkest, when thou sleepest—thy whole life pleases Me completely, if thou lovest Me.' And again: 'I shall do great things in thee before the people,

so that, in thee, I may be known and glorified and made famous, and, through thee, shall My Name be praised by many people.' And He said many other things to me, but while I listened I thought of my defects and sins, and I felt that I was not worthy of this great love. And I began to have great doubts about this communication, and I said to Him who spoke to me: 'If thou wert the Holy Spirit, thou wouldest not speak thus to me, for it is not meet nor seemly, because I am fragile and might be vain-glorious on account of Thy words.' And He replied to me: 'See, if, from these My words, thou canst be vain-glorious or self-exalted, and try, by turning thy thoughts upon other things, to rid thyself of these words.' And I searched myself to see whether I could find vain-glory, and I tried to prove if that which He had said to me were true, and if He were the Holy Spirit. And I looked back over the vineyard to find some distraction from that speech, but wheresoever I turned my eyes, He said to me: 'Now see and contemplate, this is My creature.' And I felt an ineffable sweetness, but all my sins and defects came back into my memory and I could see nothing in myself but sins and faults, and I felt more humility than I had ever felt before. And He told me also how greatly beloved I was,

and how the Son of God and the Virgin Mary bent down towards me, and came to me to speak to me. And Christ said to me: 'If the whole world were present with thee, thou couldst not any more speak with them than thou doest now, for, while I am with thee the whole world is with thee.' And to give me security from doubt, He said: 'I am He Who was crucified for thee, and Who, for thy sake, hungered and thirsted, and Who loved thee so much that I shed My blood for thee!' And He related the whole Passion to me, and said: 'Pray for grace for thyself and for thy companion and for whomsoever thou wilt, and be prepared to receive, for I am much more ready to give than thou art to receive.' And my soul cried out, saying: 'I will not pray, for I am not worthy!' And again all my sins came back to my memory, and my soul said: 'If thou who hast been speaking with me from the beginning wert the Holy Spirit, thou wouldest not say such great things to me, and, moreover, if thou wert within me, I should feel such great joy, that I could not endure it and live.' And He replied to me: 'Can anything be except according to My Will? I do not give thee other joy, neither more joy, than thou hast. And of this joy I have given less to others, and they, I tell thee, have lain neither seeing nor feeling on account

of it. And again, I give thee this sign that I Am. Try now, and talk to thy companions, and allow thy mind to dwell upon various things, good or evil, and thou wilt find it impossible to think of aught else but God, and thou wilt recognise Me, for it is I alone who can bind the mind. And these things I do to thee, not because of thy merits, but because of My Goodness.' And while He was speaking my mind became filled with the memory of my sins, and I saw myself to be more clearly worthy of Hell than I had ever done before.

And He made known to me that, had the companions with whom I was journeying been different, the aforesaid things would not have befallen me, for all the time that I was experiencing with every Divine word such great sweetness they were discussing among themselves my sickness. And I felt that if, to the end of the world, there were to be no other joy than the joy of that walk, I should not have wished it to be otherwise. For I cannot make known the greatness of this sweetness and joy of God, particularly when He said : 'I, Who enter into thee, am the Holy Spirit!' and likewise with all else He said I experienced great sweetness. I say, then, He came with me to the Church of St. Francis as He had promised, and remained till after meal-time,

when I went for the second time to the church. And when I entered the church, as I genuflected, and saw St. Francis painted on the bosom of Christ, Christ said to me: 'It is thus that I will hold thee close, and yea much more closely than can be presented to thy bodily eyes, but now is the hour that I will fill thee up and leave thee, my sweet daughter, my temple, my delight. For I tell thee that, for this consolation, I leave thee, but if thou lovest Me, I leave thee not.' And bitter as this word was, I felt with it so much sweetness that it was most delightful. And then I looked behind me that I might see with my corporal and mental vision, and I saw. And if thou askest me what I saw, I saw a real object, full of majesty, immense, and I cannot say how, but it seemed to me to be good. And He said to me many other sweet words, and He took His departure most peacefully, withdrawing with immense sweetness, not suddenly, but by degrees. Amongst other things he said this to me: 'My daughter, much more loved by Me than I by thee, my beloved temple, thou hast the ring of My love, thou art pledged to Me, and for the future thou shalt not fall away from Me, and thou and thy companion have the blessing of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.' And forthwith my soul

cried out: 'Inasmuch as Thou wilt not leave me, shall I never sin again mortally?' And He replied: 'That I say not to thee.' And as He retired I implored grace for my companion, and He replied to me: 'To thy companion I give other grace.'

With this, therefore, He withdrew. And He desired me not to lie down as He departed, but to remain standing. Nevertheless, after His departure I fell into a sitting posture, and began to shout with a loud voice and to vociferate, and I cried without shame, saying these words: 'Love, till now I knew Thee not; wherefore dost Thou leave me thus?' And I could say no more and could only cry, for I had no words with which to express myself, and was limited to voice and tears, and thus I was not understood by those who heard me. For these things befell me at the entrance of the door of the church of St. Francis, where I sat after the withdrawal of God, weeping and crying, in the presence of all the people who were worshipping there. And I noticed my own companions, standing some way off from me, blushing, for they believed another to be the cause of my tears. And I was certain, beyond any doubt, that He Who had spoken with me was God, and, because of His sweetness and my grief, I wept, wishing to die, and I grieved because He had

departed, leaving me behind, and all my bones were out of joint.

After this I left Assisi, and I proceeded on my journey with great sweetness, talking of God as I went. And, though it was great pain to me to be silent, I endeavoured to be so on account of my companions. And, on the way back from Assisi, Christ said to me: 'I give thee a sign that I am Christ, Who speak with thee, and Who have spoken with thee. I give thee, within, the Cross and the Love of God, and this sign shall be to thee for ever.' And straightway I felt, within, that Cross and the Love of God, and it overflowed into my body, and that Cross I felt corporally, my soul melting in the Love of God.

After I had returned I remained in my house, and I felt a pacific sweetness and quiet, and so great delight that I cannot describe them. And I had a very great desire to die and leave the world, so that I might not lose that sweetness and delight. And so great was my desire to die, that life to me was a greater grief than the death of my mother and of my children, and greater than any pain that I can imagine. And for eight days I lay in my house, wearied on account of the aforesaid things, and I cried: 'O Lord, have pity on me and do not

permit me to remain in the world!' And, besides these things, I often perceived an indescribable odour, and this and other experiences were such that I cannot tell them, for the words with which I have to relate are poor. And such love and sweetness as I felt are utterly indescribable.

Moreover, the aforesaid experience was granted to me many times, but not with so much sojourning, neither with so much love nor so profoundly. And after I had come from Assisi, and was lying down as I said, my companion, who was wonderful for her simplicity, purity, and virginity, heard a voice say to her: 'The Holy Spirit is in this cell.' Then she came to me and began to inquire, saying: 'Tell me what thou hast, for I have been told to come to thee.' And I replied: 'As thou hast been told thus, I am pleased.' And then I communicated to my companion much of the aforesaid secret.

CHAPTER II

VISION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS SUPREME BEAUTY, AFTER WHICH ALL CREATED BEAUTY BECAME FILTHY TO HER

UPON a certain occasion, when I was in prayer and elevated in spirit, God spoke to me words full of

love, and of great peace. And, looking behind me, I saw God speaking to me; and if thou askest me what I saw, I say that I saw Himself, and otherwise I know not how to say, except that I saw a Plenitude, a Brightness, from which I felt an indescribable repletion. I can give no similitude to what I saw, and I saw nothing corporal; but as He is in Heaven, so was He, and of such great Beauty, that I cannot say anything else, but that I saw Supreme Beauty, containing all Good. And all the Saints stood before that most beautiful Majesty, praising Him; and it seemed to me that amongst these I scarcely had a place.

And God said to me: 'Most loving daughter, sweet to Me, all the Saints of Paradise have for thee a special love, and My Mother likewise, and thou art united to Me with them.' And, notwithstanding all the things that had been told me about His Mother and the Saints, all that I had heard seemed to me to be poor in comparison of what I saw. But, so greatly loved was I in Him and so great was the sweetness that I felt from Him, that I cared not to look at the Angels nor at the Saints. For I saw that all their comeliness and goodness was from Him, and in Him, and that He Himself was All and Supreme Good, and all Beauty, and, so greatly did I delight in His

Beauty, that I cared not to look at any other creature. And He said to me: 'I have an immense love for thee, but I do not show Myself to thee, yea rather do I hide Myself from thee.' And my soul said to Him: 'Wherefore dost Thou love me so, and take so much delight in me, when I am so filthy, and have offended Thee my whole life long?' Verily He replied to me: 'So great is the love that I have reposed in thee, that I scarcely remember thy defects, although Mine eyes see them; in thee have I reposed great treasure.' And my soul felt this to be so certainly true that she doubted in nothing, and she felt and saw that the Eyes of God were looking at her, into which Eyes she looked, and had therein so great delight that no man could describe it, yea even were one of the Saints of Paradise to come down in order to make it manifest. And therewith He told me that He had concealed much love from me because I could not bear it. And my soul replied: 'If Thou art God Almighty, Thou canst make me able to bear it.' And He replied: 'If I were to do so, thou wouldst have all that thou desirest, and thou wouldst no longer hunger for Me. Therefore will I not do so, for, whilst thou art in this life, it is even My Will that thou shouldst hunger for Me, and desire Me, and languish for Me.'

CHAPTER III

VISION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS INVINCIBLE OMNIPOTENCE, FROM WHICH VISION SHE OBTAINED GRACE AND POWER TO BE PROFITABLE TO PERSONS IN THE PRESENT AND IN THE FUTURE

ONCE a Divine locution was made to me, saying: 'I, Who speak with thee, am Divine Power, for I bring thee a Divine grace; and the grace which I bring thee is this: I will that thou be of profit to all men who shall see thee, and not to them alone, but that thou help and be of profit to all those who shall think of thee, or remember thee, or hear thee named; and to them who have most of Me thou shalt be of greatest profit.' And then my soul, although she felt great joy, said: 'I desire not that grace, for I fear lest it injure me, and that, because of it, I be vainglorious.' And He replied at once, saying: 'Thou hast nothing to do with it, for it is not thine: thou art only the guardian of it; use it well and give it back to Him Whose it is.' And my soul understood that in this way that grace could not injure her. And He said to me: 'It pleases Me that thou hast this fear.'

After which, in church, the most sweet locution was made to me, which, forthwith, renewed my whole mind. He said to me: 'My daughter, sweet to Me,' (but His words were far sweeter,) 'no creature can give thee consolation but I alone. I will cover thee with My Power.' And straightway the eyes of my soul were opened and I saw a Plenitude of God, in which I comprehended the whole world on this side of the sea and beyond, the lakes and the depths, in all of which I saw nothing except the Divine Power, in an utterly indescribable manner; and my soul, filled with wonder, exclaimed saying: 'This world is full of God!' And I comprehended the whole world, almost as though it were a small thing. And I saw the Power of God exceeding everything and filling everything. And He said to me: 'I have shown thee something of My Power.' And I understood in such a way that thereafter I was able better to understand other things.

And He said to me: 'Thou hast seen something of My Power; now thou mayest see My Humility.' And I saw God's great abasement to man, and His great humility, and my soul, comprehending the Divine Power and seeing such profound humility, was filled with wonder, and counted herself to be nothing, and saw in herself nothing but pride. And

I began to ponder with myself and to repute myself utterly unworthy of Communion, to such a degree that I did not want to communicate. And He said to me, after He had shown me His Power and Humility: 'My daughter, no creature can arrive at the point of seeing to which thou art come, except he be raised by a special Divine grace.' As, therefore, I was in church, close upon the Elevation of the Body of Christ, He said to me: 'Behold the Power is now upon the Altar, and I am within thee, and if thou receive Me, thou receivest Me Whom thou hast already received. Communicate, therefore, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. And I, Who am worthy, make thee worthy.' And then there remained in me an indescribable sweetness and a great joy, which my whole life long have not failed me.

CHAPTER IV

VISION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS SUPREME WISDOM, FROM WHICH VISION SHE LEARNED TO JUDGE ALL THINGS WITHOUT ERROR

On one occasion I was requested by someone to ask certain things of God that he wished to know.

And I doubted in myself whether I should do so, for it seemed to me that it was pride and foolishness to ask such things. While I was standing with such thoughts, suddenly my mind was raised and was placed, in the first elevation, at a table without beginning and without end. And I was not placed so as to see this table, but what was above it. And I saw an indescribable Plenitude of God, of which I can narrate nothing, neither say anything, except that what I saw was plainly the Plenitude of Divine Wisdom, and of All Good. And I saw that Plenitude of Divine Wisdom, and, in It, I saw it was not permitted to seek to know those things which It will do, for that is anticipating and dishonouring It. And therefore when I see persons inquiring into Divine Wisdom, I see and understand that they err. And, from what I saw above that table, clearly Divine Wisdom, there remained with me the power of understanding and judging all spiritual persons and spiritual things, when I hear them spoken of or narrated. And I judge not, as I judged formerly, to err and sin, but I judge with another true judgment by which I understand, and by which I have, or can have, the knowledge of having sinned in my former judgment. And I know not how to relate otherwise what I saw, but what my soul brought back from

the vision to put into words was clearly the table, and my being placed at it in the first elevation. But of those things, in order to see which I was placed at that table, I can narrate nothing except what I have said.

CHAPTER V

VISION AND CONSOLATION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS SUPREME JUSTICE, AND MORE; FROM WHICH VISION SHE OBTAINED APPROBATION OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS

On a certain occasion, when in prayer, I asked of God (not because I doubted, but because I wanted to know more of God), saying: 'Wherefore, O Lord, didst Thou create man, and wherefore, after Thou hadst created him, didst Thou allow him to sin? And wherefore didst Thou permit so great a Passion to be suffered as was suffered by Thy Son, when Thou couldst, quite as well, have made us pleasing and grateful to Thee, and have given us as much virtue as Thou hast now done, by any other means?' And my soul comprehended, without any doubt, that what I said—namely, that by any other means God could have wrought our virtue and salvation—was

true. And it seemed to me that I was forced and urged on to question and reflect upon the aforesaid subject, and, as I was in prayer, I wished to persevere in it and not leave off, but to urge God upon this subject. And I passed many days, asking the aforesaid things, doubting in nothing, as I said before. And I was given to understand that God did these things and allowed them, so that His goodness might be made thereby more manifest and more suitable to us. But that was not sufficient to make me fully understand it, for I still understood, most certainly, and knew that God might have done otherwise had He wished to save us in any other way.

Then my soul was elevated, and she saw that what I had asked had no beginning and no end, and, being in darkness, she wanted to return to herself, but she could not do so. And she wanted to proceed, but could not. And she was suddenly completely lifted up and illuminated, and she saw the inexpressible Power of God, and the Will, and Goodness and Justice of God, in which vision she fully understood all those things which she had asked. And she was drawn out of her previous darkness ; for I had been lying upon the ground, and, during that great illumination, I stood on tiptoe. And I felt an agility and refreshment of body, such as I had never before

experienced. And I felt myself in such fulness of charity, and I understood with such joy in that Power and Will and Justice of God, that I understood, not only those things about which I had asked, but I was satisfied as to the saving and salvation offered to every creature, and about the devils and the damned and all things. But all this I cannot explain in words, for it is utterly beyond nature.

And although I perfectly understood that, had He wished, God could have saved us in another way, yet was I unable to see that He could have done better for us, considering His power and goodness, nor that He could better have expressed the same. And with that I was contented, and sure that, if I knew for certain that I was damned, I could not reasonably grieve, nor labour less, nor be less zealous in prayer or for the honour of God, so perfectly did I understand His justice. And there was left a peace and quiet and solidity in my soul, which I never remember to have experienced before so completely, and in which I continually rest.

After I had seen the Power of God and His Will and Justice, I was raised thence higher, and then I saw neither the Power nor the Will as before, but I saw a stable object, utterly indescribable by me, except that it was All Good. And my soul was in an

indescribable joy. And, in that state, I saw, not love, but that utterly indescribable object. And when I issued from the first state into that higher indescribable state I know not whether I was in the body or out of it. And all the visions I had before did not seem to me to be so great as these states. And there remained to me, from them, a mortification of vices, and a security for virtue, by which I love the good and well-doing, and even the evil and evil-doing, for certainly these latter no longer cause me displeasure. I am left, therefore, in great peace and with a veneration for the Divine judgments, so that, morning and evening, in my prayers I say to God : 'By Thy judgments, O Lord, deliver me,' or, 'By Thy judgment, O Lord, deliver me.' And I say this with as much love and confidence as I say : 'By Thy Advent, O Lord, deliver me ; by Thy Nativity, O Lord, deliver me ; by Thy Passion, O Lord, deliver me.' For I do not recognise the goodness of God more fully in the blessed man, or in the holy man, or in many good and holy men, than I do in the man who is damned or in a multitude of men who are damned.

But that depth was never shown to me but once, but I never forget that memory nor that joy. And if, by an impossibility, all the faithful were to fail, there would remain nevertheless with me a

certitude of God and of His judgments and of the justice of His judgments! But oh, how great depth is there here! Nevertheless all things come back to the utility of the good. For the soul who has this knowledge of the Divine judgments and of these depths, will have, out of this knowledge of God, fruit from all things.

CHAPTER VI

VISION AND CONSOLATION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS LOVE; FROM WHICH VISION SHE WAS TRANSFORMED IN DIVINE LOVE

ONCE, in Lent, it seemed to me that I was very dry and without devotion. And I prayed God that He would give me of Himself, because where all good was concerned I was very dry; and then the eyes of my soul were opened, and I saw Love coming towards me, and I saw the beginning but I did not see the end, only Its continuation. And I know not any similitude for Its colour. And immediately, when Love had reached me, the eyes of my soul were opened and I saw much more of these things than I could have seen with the eyes of the body. And Love came towards me, as it were, like a scythe. This

similitude is not to be taken as regards measurable quantity, but Love was like a scythe, in that It appeared and withdrew, and It had not conferred, in Its withdrawal, as much as It had seemed to promise. And I was straightway filled with love and an inestimable satiety, which although it sated me generated in me a great hunger, so inestimable that all my members were out of joint and my soul languished and desired to attain to the residue. And I desired not to see nor feel nor hear any other creature, and I spoke not. But my soul spoke within me, imploring Love not to make her languish through so great love, for I reckoned life to be death. And she invoked first the Blessed Virgin and then the Apostles, whom she implored to go with her to the Most High, and make known to Him that He must not allow her to suffer this death completely, but permit her to arrive at Him whom she felt. And she implored Blessed Francis likewise and the Evangelists.

And when, on account of the approach to me which I felt, I believed myself to be all love, I said: 'Many there are who think that they dwell in love and they are in hate, and, contrariwise, there are many who believe themselves to be in hate and are really in love.' And my soul asked to see most certainly, and God granted my request, and I felt it

clearly, so that I was quite contented. And so filled am I with that love that I do not think that I could ever again be without it, and were any creature to tell me otherwise I could not believe them, and were an angel to do so I should not believe him, but should reply to him: 'Thou art he who fell from Heaven.'

And I saw in myself two divisions, as if a road had been made in me; and in one division I saw love and every good which was God's and not mine, and in the other I saw myself, dry, and I saw I had nothing good belonging to me. And in that way I saw that it was not I who loved, however much I might see myself to be in love, but that the love was God's alone, with which He reunited Himself, and then conferred more and more ardent love than before; and I had a great desire to become one with this love. And between the aforesaid love, which is so great that I knew not that greater love could be (except when that love which showed itself in death supervened), and the other mortal love and extreme ardour, there is a certain medium, of which I can narrate nothing, on account of its many depths, its great joys and delights. And I cannot bear to hear of the Passion, nor can I hear the name of God, for when I hear His name, I feel Him, with so great love, that I long to be crucified for love's

sake, and anything less is, as it were, an impediment to me. And it seems to me that nothing has been said in the Gospel or in the Life of Christ, or in any other locution of God, but that I have seen greater and more incomparable things in God. And, after that vision of love, I remain completely happy and in an angelical state, so that I love toads, buffoons, and even devils. And, when I am in that state, were dogs to eat me, I should not care, and it does not seem to me as if I could suffer any pain, either which is, or which has been recorded, or which is in the dolorous memories of the Passion of Christ, or in this state of tears.

And this state is greater than that of standing at the foot of the Cross by continual recollection, as did the Blessed Francis, although my soul frequently sees one or another degree of the Passion, and desires to see that Flesh, dead for us ; but in this state is love with great joy, without the dolour of the Passion. Once, nevertheless, was united as it were with this love the inestimable memory of the price, namely of the Precious Blood, by which indulgence is given to the world, and I marvelled, as it were, how these things could be ; but, with all this, there was none of the dolour of the Passion. But the Passion is the way and the example which I must take.

CHAPTER VII

VISION AND CONSOLATION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD INASMUCH AS HE IS THREE PERSONS IN ONE; WHICH VISION SHE SAW WITH DARKNESS BUT FROM WHICH SHE OBTAINED A PERFECT AND HOLY HOPE WITH EVERY CERTAINTY.

On a certain occasion my soul was rapt, and I saw God with greater clearness and fulness than I had ever done before. And in that elevation I saw not love, and I lost that love which I previously bore, and I became not love. And then I saw Him in a darkness, and this because he is Great Good, who cannot be imagined neither understood, and were all things possible to be imagined or understood, they would not attain to that Good. And then my soul was given a certain faith, a sure and firm hope and a continual security in God, which took away all fear. And, in that Goodness, which was shown thus in darkness, I recollected myself completely, and I was made so secure in God that I can never doubt this, namely, that most certainly I have God; and in that most efficacious Good, seen in darkness, my hope is now quite recollected and secure. I see God frequently in this way and in this Good, which

cannot be outwardly narrated, and, indeed, cannot be imagined in the heart. In that most certain and inclusive Good, I say, which I comprehend with so much darkness, I have all my hope, and in seeing that which I want to have I have all things, and in seeing what I want to know I know all things, and therein I see all good. Nor is the soul in her vision able to think of the departure of that Good, or of her departure from it, nor that she should ever be obliged to depart from it, but she delights ineffably in that good which is every good, and yet the soul sees nothing whatever that can be narrated by the tongue nor even conceived by the heart, and yet she sees, at the same time, absolutely everything ; and that Good is the more certain, and the more exceeding all others, that it comes with darkness and is most secret, and I afterwards see in that darkness that it exceeds every good and all things that are; the darkness itself is other than it, and everything that can be thought of falls short of it. For indeed the visions of Divine Wisdom and of Divine Will and of Divine Power, which the soul had, so wonderfully and indescribably, upon other occasions, were not so great as this vision of most certain Good. For that Good which I see is complete, and the other things are a part. And the vision of the other things, although

they are indescribable, brings a great and overflowing joy to the body, but when God is seen thus, in darkness, the vision brings not laughter to the lips, nor fervour and devotion to the heart, neither fervent love. For the body trembles not, and is not moved nor changed, as in the other visions, and it sees nothing. The soul alone sees, and the body is quiet and sleeps, and the tongue is as it were cut off, for it can say nothing. And so much less to me than that Good, which I see so darkly, are all my friendships, of which God has given me many and ineffable ones, and every sweet word and all the other things which He has given me, that I place no hope in them, and were it possible that they were all unreal, my hope would not diminish on that account, because of the certainty of the hope which I have in that All-Good which I see so darkly.

And my mind was elevated three times, so as to see God in this higher and ineffable way with much darkness and marvellous grace of vision, and, though I may have seen that All-Good many and innumerable times as well, and with darkness too, it was only three times, as I said, that I saw Him in the aforesaid highest way, with so much darkness. And when, on the one side, my body is shattered by its infirmities, and the world drives me forth with its thorns and bitternesses, and the devils afflict me with many

temptations and infest me with almost continual persecutions, God having given them power to afflict me, having placed my soul in their hands (so that indeed I see them almost corporally against me), then, from the other, the real side, God draws me to Himself, to that Good which I see in darkness, for I see the Holy Trinity in darkness, and in the midst of this Trinity, which I see so darkly, it seems as if I were standing and resting. And it draws me more than any other thing which I have experienced, and more than any other good I have seen. For this vision cannot be compared with any others. And so greatly does that Good which I see exceed any words which I can use, that all I say of it seems to be nothing, yea it seems as if I spoke wrongly, or were blaspheming, in saying anything at all about it. For, in that vision of Good, I remember not Christ's humanity nor God as man nor anything which has form, and yet, notwithstanding that I see all things, I see nothing. It is true that, when the aforesaid separation of my soul to that Good takes place, I see God-Man, and, with great meekness, He draws my soul to Himself, saying now and again: 'Thou art I, and I am Thou.' And I see those eyes and that face and they are most pacifying, and they encompass my soul and draw her to Him with

immense cunning. And the aforesaid Good, that I see with darkness, proceeds from the vision of those eyes and of that face and emanates from within, and it is that Good which delights me so much and so indescribably. And my soul, dwelling in this God-Man is alive, and I dwell much in Him, and more continually than in that Good of which I have the vision with darkness. But it is the latter which draws my soul the most strongly without any comparison. But, in this vision of the God-Man I dwell almost constantly, and once God gave me a surety that there was nothing separating Him and me, and that continual joy in the Humanity has remained with me day and night from that time. And I long always to sing and to praise God, and I say: 'I praise Thee, O Lord of Love, in the Cross I have made my bed.' And for head coverings and for soft feathers have I found poverty, and my means of rest are pain and contempt. And in the aforesaid bed He Himself was born, brought up, and died. And God the Father so loved this company—namely, poverty, contempt, and pain—that He gave it to His Son, and, in this bed the Son was willing to lie continually, and He always loved and agreed with the Father. And in this bed I found rest and quiet, and in it I hope to die, and by it I believe I shall be saved. And

the joy which I expect to receive from those hands and from those feet is indescribable, for, when I see Him, I long never to be separated from Him, but to go completely to Him, and in living, therefore, I die. And when I think of Him I cannot speak, for my tongue is as it were cut out. And if I cease from my thought of Him, then the world and everything about me drives me to greater longing. And this my desire, through the weariness of expectation, is mortal pain to me. And in these visions and consolations my soul was most frequently elevated and consoled by the most sweet God, to Whom be glory and honour for ever and ever, Amen.

CHAPTER VIII

VISION AND CONSOLATION IN WHICH SHE SAW GOD IN THE MOST PERFECT VISION POSSIBLE IN THIS LIFE; FROM WHICH VISION SHE OBTAINED A FIRMNESS IN GOOD PURPOSE, AND A PERFECT LOVE FOR GOD.

FOLLOWING upon the aforesaid things, I was rapt in spirit, and I found myself in God completely, in such a way as I had never before experienced, and it seemed to me that I was in the midst of the

Trinity, in a higher and greater degree than I had ever before been, and I felt that I was receiving greater good than I was wont to do, and that I remained continually in this good, and that I was filled with delights and inexpressible love. And these things utterly surpassed all my former experiences. And divine operations went on in my soul which were so ineffable that neither angel nor saint could relate or explain them. And I know that no angel nor any other creature is capable of understanding those operations and that most profound abyss. And when I speak of them it seems to me as if I were speaking evilly or blaspheming. And I am drawn forth out of those things which I formerly experienced, and in which I so greatly delighted, namely the Life and the Humanity of Christ, and from the consideration of that most mysterious society so pleasing to God from all eternity which He enjoyed with His Son, and from the consideration of the poverty, the pain, and the contempt borne by the living Son of God, which consideration used to be my resting place and my bed. And I am as it were drawn beyond that way of seeing God in darkness which used so greatly to delight me. And out of all those previous states I have been drawn so gently and so quietly, that, except by remembering

that I was no longer in them, I had no perception of leaving them.

And in those ineffable benefits and divine operations, which are brought about as aforesaid in my soul, God at first presents Himself to the soul working ineffable divine operations ; and He afterwards proceeds to make Himself manifest to her, revealing Himself to her, and giving her greater gifts with greater certitude and ineffable clearness. And He presents Himself to the soul in two ways, at first : by the first way He is presented intimately to my soul, and when I understand Him to be present, I then understand how He is present in all nature, how in all things He has being—in the Devil, in the good angel, in Paradise, in Hell, in the adulterer, in the murderer, in every good work, and in everything having being, in some way or another, in fair things as well as filthy. Wherefore, when I experience this truth, I do not take more pleasure in the contemplation of a good angel or of a good work than in the contemplation of a bad angel or of a bad work. And God presents Himself most assiduously to my soul in the aforesaid way, and when He does so, He does it with great illumination and truth and divine grace. So that the soul, seeing Him thus, can in no way offend. And this illumination brings

much good into the soul, and she, understanding God to be present, is humiliated and confused on account of her sins, whereby she receives great weight of wisdom, and much divine consolation and great joy. And He presents Himself in another way, more specially and very differently, and in doing so He bestows other joys upon the soul than the aforesaid, and gathers her up completely into Himself and brings about many divine operations in her, with greater graces than in the first way, and with indescribable abyss of delights and illuminations, so that that Presence of God in the soul alone, without any other gift, is that which the Saints have in Everlasting Life. It is true that, of those gifts which the Saints have in Everlasting Life, some have more and some have less. Of which gifts, moreover, I am not worthy to speak, for, in so doing, I blaspheme more than in not mentioning them at all. But I say that among the Saints there are different expansions of soul, so that some have greater capabilities of receiving and partaking of God. And it is likewise with the soul. When God presents Himself to the soul, manifesting and revealing Himself to her, He expands her and gives her gifts and sweets in a way that He had never before done. And then is my soul drawn out of darkness, and a greater knowledge of God is wrought

in her more clearly than I could have thought possible. And these things are brought about with so much clearness, sweetness, and certitude, and with such depth, that no heart could comprehend them. Wherefore, neither can the heart understand anything of it, nor even form any thoughts concerning it, except in so far as is granted to the soul by God to rise to that to which the heart, of itself, can never attain. Therefore it is not possible to say anything at all about it, nor can any words be found to express it, nor can thought or intellect attain to it, so greatly does it exceed all other things.

And although the Divine Scripture is so high that no man in the world is wise enough to understand it completely, even though he were to possess all the wisdom possible in this state, so greatly does the Scripture surpass his intellect, yet, nevertheless, he babbles something of it. But of these ineffable divine operations of the manifestation of God in the soul not one word can be spoken, and of them no man can babble. And because my soul has been frequently raised into the Divine secret I understand this thing: namely, how holy and divine Scripture is, at the same time easy and difficult, how it seems to assert and to contradict, and how it is of no service to those who, not observing it, are damned out of it,

and how, contrariwise, it is fulfilled in those persons who, observing it, are saved out of it. And these words which I speak, returning from the secret of God, I speak securely, being over and above knowledge, but they are outside those ineffable divine operations, in no way coming near them—yea, my speaking of them is even as it were a blasphemy and devastation. For, were all divine consolations and pleasures and all spiritual joys which ever were, and were all the Saints, from the beginning of the world, to expound assiduously of God, and were all worldly delights, good and bad, which ever were, to be changed into good and spiritual ones, and to go on with me to perfection and to lead me to that indescribable good of Divine manifestation, I would not, I say, for all these things, exchange the delight which I experience in that indescribable manifestation of God which is as swift as the opening and shutting of an eye. And I tell thee this that thou mayest, in some measure, have in thy heart that good which I have, and which infinitely surpasses all the aforesaid things. And this delight of which I speak I experience not only for the space of the opening and the shutting of an eye, but I have it oftentimes for a longer time, and most efficaciously. And in the former way I have it almost continually, but not so efficaciously.

And although I can experience sadness and joy exteriorly, I cannot interiorily; for in my soul is a room into which no joy nor sadness, nor pleasure of any kind, neither virtue nor anything else, can enter. But into that room enters that All-Good. And in that manifestation of God (although I blaspheme in mentioning Christ in this way, for I cannot perfectly name Him otherwise) is All Truth. And in Him I understand and have the whole truth which is in Heaven and in Hell and on earth and in every creature, with so much truth and certitude, that in no way, were the whole world to say the opposite, could I believe otherwise, yea, I should ridicule them who were to say it.

For I see Him Who is Essence, and I see how He is the Essence of all creatures. And I see how He made me more capable of understanding the aforesaid better way than I was before, when I saw with that darkness which used formerly so greatly to delight me. And I see myself alone with God, all Purity, all Holiness, all Truth, all Rectitude, all Certitude, and in Him all Heavenliness. And when I am in this state I remember nothing else. And sometimes, when I was in this state, God said to me: 'Daughter of Divine Wisdom, temple of delights, delight of delights, and daughter of peace, in thee rests the whole

Trinity, the whole Truth, so that thou holdest Me and I hold thee.' And one of the works which God Himself wrought in my soul is a power of comprehending, with great capacity and great delight, how it is that God comes into the Sacrament of the Altar with that great and noble union. It is true, when I am out of this greatest state I see myself to be all sin and obedient to sin, dark and impure, entirely false and full of error. But I am quiet, and there remains continually with me a Divine unction, which is a supreme unction, and which I may have at all times of the day.

In the aforesaid state, in truth, I am not perfected, but I am led by God and raised, although I know not how to will it, nor desire it, nor pray for it, and I am now almost continually in it, and oftentimes is my soul raised to God without my consent being required; for, while I neither hope for nor imagine anything of the kind, suddenly my soul is raised to God and the Lord. And I understand the whole world, and I seem not to be on the earth, but to be in Heaven with God. And this most excellent state, in which I am now, is above my former states. For it has such completeness and clearness and certitude and nobility and dilation, that I do not feel any other state to come near it. And I have experienced this manifestation of God more than a

thousand times, each time in a new and different way. And once, on the Feast of Holy Mary at Candlemas, I experienced that indescribable manifestation of God, and He worked in my soul in such a way that a representation was made to my soul of herself. And I saw her to have such nobility and height that I could not have believed possible of her, or, indeed, of any of the souls in Paradise, and at that time my soul could not understand herself. Wherefore if the soul, who is created finite and limited, cannot understand herself, how much less can she understand her Creator, immense, infinite, and unlimited ?

Wherefore my soul then presented herself to God with the greatest security, so much so that she had no fear. She presented herself to God with greater delight than I had before experienced, and with a new and most excellent joy, and with so much new wonder and light that I could never have imagined there to be such in my soul. And in that encounter which I had at that time with God, when I understood the aforesaid indescribable manifestation of God, some words were said to me by the Most High God which I do not wish to be written. And these remained with the soul when she returned to herself, and she found them within her, so that she was pleased to bear every pain and injury for God, and

they prevented her from ever being able to separate herself from God again, for anything which could be said or done. Wherefore my soul cried out and said: 'Oh, sweet Lord, what is there which could separate me from Thee?' And I understood that I was told that, His grace mediating, nothing could ever separate me from God again. And I heard all the aforesaid things told me by God, in a much more wonderful way than I can relate them. Moreover, I was told that the aforesaid ineffable manifestation of God is that good which the saints enjoy in eternal life. And that Good is not other than the aforesaid, but there it is experienced in a different way, so that the least saint in eternal life, who possesses least, has more than can be given to any soul in this life before the death of the body. And I relate what my soul understood of these things in that indescribable manifestation of God.

CHAPTER IX

VISION IN WHICH SHE WAS ASSURED THAT SHE WAS NOT DECEIVED IN ANY OF HER VISIONS AND DIVINE AND SPIRITUAL LOCUTIONS

ONCE, on a Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, some time after my conversion, I besought the Blessed

Virgin to obtain for me the grace from her Son, that I might know myself not to be deceived by the locutions which were made to me; and a Divine locution was made to me, promising that it should be done, saying as follows: 'God shows Himself to thee, is spoken to by thee, gives to thee a feeling of Himself; do thou therefore avoid speaking, seeing, and hearing everything except it be according to Him.' And I understood this which was said to me, with much discretion and great promptitude. And I remained in great joy on account of the aforesaid locutions which were made to me, and in great hope of having that which gave me grace, namely of having His licence for whatever I might do. I began, therefore, to do those three things which were told me, and my heart was raised above all earthly things and placed in God. And whatever I did, whether I ate or whether I talked, it did not prevent my heart from being always in God. I could not think of, nor see nor feel anything but God. And if I stood in prayer, and wished to go and eat, I asked His permission, and He Himself gave it to me, saying: 'Go, eat, with the blessing of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' And He gave me permission sometimes speedily and sometimes tardily. And this experience I had for

three days and three nights. Finally, in spirit, I saw God at a certain Mass, in the elevation of the Body of Christ. After which vision there remained in me an indescribable sweetness and a great joy, which I do not think has ever quitted me. And in the aforesaid vision I received the assurance for which I had prayed, and no further doubt was left me. And I was completely satisfied that I was not deceived in the aforesaid locutions.

CHAPTER X

CONSOLATION AND VISION IN WHICH SHE WAS ASSURED THAT SHE WAS NOT DECEIVED IN HER LOCUTIONS

WHILST I was in prayer another time, suddenly some most peaceful words were said to me; and He said thus: 'My daughter, sweet to me, much more so than I to thee, my temple, my delight, the heart of God Almighty is over thy heart.' And with these words there came into my heart a most delightful feeling such as I had never before experienced. I felt it in all my members, and in this feeling I lay down. And He said within me: 'God Almighty reposes His love in thee, more than in any other woman in this city. He Himself delights in thee

and in thy companion. And be zealous to make thy life a light to all who see it, and truly the judgment on those who see it not will be hard and severe.' And my soul understood from this that the judgment of literate persons will be more cruel than that of the laity, because they knew these divine things, through the Scripture, and despised them.

And again He added: 'The love which God reposes in you is so great that He is continually with you, but not with this feeling, and His eyes are now in you.' And it seemed to me that I saw the Divine eyes with my mental vision. And they gave me more delight than I can express. But it is a grief to me that I relate these things in a way which is laughable. Yet, notwithstanding the great joy which I experienced, my sins were recalled to my memory, and I felt that there was no good in me, and that I did nothing which should please God. And I began to doubt about those things which were said to me, and which were so great, and I said: 'If Thou Who speakest with me wert the Son of God Almighty, would not my soul receive greater joy than she does? For that joy of feeling Thee within me I could never endure, because I am so unworthy of it.' And He replied to me: 'It is not My will that thou shouldst experience greater joy now, but there is more prepared

for thee, and know, that the whole world is full of Me.' And I saw then that every creature was full of Him. And He said to me: 'I can do all things, and I can make thee see Me, as I was with the Apostles, and thou shalt not feel Me.' But these words He said not corporally, but my soul understood them and much more, and I felt that they were true. But, to prove them, my soul cried out: 'Since it is thus that Thou art Almighty God, and that these great things that Thou sayest are true, give me a sign that I may be sure, and draw me out of doubt.' And I prayed that He would give me a bodily sign of some kind or another, to place in my hand a candle, or a precious stone, or some other thing that I might see clearly, and I promised that I would not show that sign unless He wished me to do so. And He Himself replied: 'Such a sign as thou askest would be a joy to thee when thou shouldst see or touch it, but it would not draw thee out of doubt, for the sign itself might deceive thee. But I will give thee a better sign than that which thou askest, which shall be continually in thy soul, and which thou shalt always feel. And this shall be the sign: Thou shalt always be fervent in love, and in the love of God, and illuminated by the knowledge of God within thee. And this sign shall be to thee most certain,

for only I can make it. And this is the sign which I told thee is better than the one which thou askedst of Me. And I will send thee a love of Me which will inebriate thy soul, and will keep thee perpetually on fire for Me, and cause thee to endure tribulation for My love, and to be grateful when thou art evilly spoken of or ill-treated, and to declare thyself unworthy of such graces. For so great was this love of Mine for thee that for you I endured all things with humility. Know therefore that I am in thee, if, when any speak evil of thee or ill-treat thee, thou dost not only patiently endure, but desirest the like again, and art grateful for it. This latter is a certain sign of the grace of God. And behold I anoint thee with an ointment, Syrocoso, with which a holy man called Saint Cyricus was anointed, and many other saints as well.'

And immediately I felt that ointment so sweetly that I longed to die, and I desired moreover to die with great torments, but I deemed myself unworthy to endure torments such as the saints had suffered for Christ, but I desired much more terrible torments. And I wanted the whole world to cry shame upon me, and death to overthrow me with every torment. And it was a delight to me to pray for those persons who had injured me, and I marvelled no more at

those saints who prayed to God for their murderers and persecutors, for, not only should they have prayed for them, but they should have tried to obtain special grace for them. Therefore was I not only most ready to pray to God for those who injured me, but to love them with great love and compassion. I felt, with that anointing, such sweetness within and without as I had never before experienced, and which I cannot express by any words great or small. And this consolation was different to previous ones which I had experienced, in that, formerly, my only desire was to die immediately, but now I desired a burdensome death, prolonged by every torment, and that every one of my limbs might be tortured. And these things seemed to me to be but small. And my soul comprehended how small is every torment beside those goods which are promised in Eternal Life, and she comprehended most certainly. And were all the wise men in the world to tell me otherwise I should not believe them. And I do not believe I should be lying were I to say that all they who follow the aforesaid way are saved. And this sign sank down so firmly into my soul with so clear a light and illumination, that I think I would undergo martyrdom rather than have it otherwise. And I feel clearly that in this sign is the way of salva-

tion: namely, to love and desire suffering for the love of God.

And I heard God speaking to me, saying: 'Cause to be written at the end of these things: Give thanks to God. And whosoever will retain grace, let him not lift his eyes from the Cross, be he in joy or in sadness, for it is I Who permit all things to him.' And my soul understood all that was said about the aforesaid sign more fully than I can say, and with greater delight and love than can be told; and may it be the will of God that I sin not in relating, as I do, thus badly, and with so many defects.

OF THE DEATH OF BLESSED ANGELA

NOW when Angela was lying prostrate, in her last sickness, her mind being more fully absorbed in the abyss of the Divine Infinity, she used to speak to us at long intervals, and with many interruptions. Let us who were present briefly recall her words as far as we were able to understand them. Once she said (it was about the Feast of the Lord's Nativity, at which time she herself passed to Christ): 'The Word was made flesh,' and after a long delay she continued, as if returning from elsewhere: 'Every creature fails, and the intellect of all the angels is not sufficient.'

On being asked by us how every creature failed, and for what the angelic intellect was insufficient, she replied : 'To comprehend.' Afterwards she said : 'Oh, behold in truth my God, Who has kept His promise to me, for Christ His Son has presented me to His Father.' She had said before : 'You know how Christ was in the ship while the tempest was so great? In truth it is so sometimes in the soul, when He permits temptations to come, Himself seeming to sleep the while.' And again she said : 'In truth, until God permits the entire personality to be inclined to, and filled with His will, He does not allow temptations and storms to end ; and this He does specially for His own legitimate children.' On another occasion, also, she said to us : 'I would gladly speak to you, my children, if I knew that I should not be deceived,' referring here to the promise of her death, for, through her desire to die, she feared greatly that she might recover from that illness. And she continued : 'What I say to you I only say in order that you may follow that which I have not followed,' adding : 'My soul is washed and cleansed in the Blood of Christ, which is as fresh and warm as if it had just issued from the body of the Crucified, and it was said to my soul : "This is what has cleansed thee," and my soul replied : "My God, shall I be

deceived in my hope?" and the answer was, "No."' Afterwards she said: 'Christ, the Son of God, has just presented me to His Father, and these words were said to me: "O spouse and fair one, beloved of Me in truth, I will not that thou come to Me in such grief, but with delight, and clothed with a royal garment, as befits the nuptials of the King with His long-loved bride;" and He showed me a garment, as a bridegroom might his dearly loved betrothed, which was not purple nor scarlet, nor made of samite, but a certain wonderful light, with which the soul is clothed. And then He showed me Himself, the Bridegroom, the Eternal Word, so that I now understand what the Word is, that very Word Who became Incarnate for me, that same Word Who died for me, and He took me in His arms, and touched me, and said to me: "Come, my beloved, my bride, whom I love with true love—come, for all the saints are joyfully waiting for thee." And He said to me: "I will not entrust thee to the charge of angels nor any saints to bring thee, but I will come in My own Person for thee and will take thee to Myself, for thou art become sweet and grateful to My Majesty."'

Now, when she was approaching her end, on the eve that is to say of her death, she frequently murmured: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my

soul and my spirit.' And once, after those words, she said to us who were present: 'It has been told me in reply to what I just said: "It is impossible that thou have not in death that which has been impressed on thy heart in life."' Then we replied: 'Thou wishest, then, to depart and abandon us?' And she answered: 'I have hitherto hidden from you, but now I hide from you no longer, that I must indeed depart.' The same day all the pains with which she had been so horribly afflicted, both internally and externally through all her limbs, departed, and she lay in such peace of body and blitheness of spirit that she appeared to be already tasting the joy that had been promised her. We therefore questioned her if that predicted joy were already hers, and she replied that it had already commenced. And, lying in this peace of body and delight of mind, until after compline on Saturday, in the midst of many friars who celebrated the mysteries of the Office at the last hour of that day, which was the Octave of the Innocents, as one falling into a light sleep, she rested in peace. And her most holy soul, freed from the flesh, absorbed into the abyss of the Divine Infinity, being about to reign with Christ, received from that same Christ her bridegroom, the stole of innocency and immortality, to which end may Christ Himself bring us also,

through the virtue of His Holy Cross, and through the merit of His Virgin Mother, and through the intercession of this our most holy mother Angela. Amen.

The venerable bride of Christ, Angela of Foligno, passed from the tempest of this world to the joys of Heaven, at the time long before predicted to her, in the year of our Lord's Incarnation 1309, the day before the Nones of January in the time of our Lord Pope Clement V.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

HARNACK ON THE CONNEXION OF MYSTICISM AND CATHOLICISM

PROFESSOR HARNACK goes so far as to say that 'a Mystic that does not become a Catholic is a *dilettante*.' He has the following remarkable passage on the essential connexion of Catholicism and Mysticism. The italics are Harnack's.

'*Mysticism is Catholic piety in general, so far as this piety is not merely ecclesiastical obedience—that is, fides implicita.* Just for that reason Mysticism is not *one* form among others of pre-Reformation piety—perhaps the latent Evangelical—but is the Catholic expression of *individual* piety in general. The Reformation element that is ascribed to it lies here simply in this, that Mysticism, *i.e.* Catholic piety, when developed in a particular direction, is led to the discernment of the inherent *responsibility* of the soul of which no *authority* can again deprive it. . . . If Mysticism is withdrawn from the Catholic Church and set down as "Protestant," then Catholicism is emptied of its character, and evangelical faith becomes deteriorated. Is there, then, to be

no living and individual Catholic piety? But where should we have to seek it, if not in Mysticism? In the three centuries before the Reformation, where can we find even a single manifestation of truly religious life that had not its source in "Mysticism"? Or is Mysticism to be denied to Catholicism because the latter requires, above everything else, devotion to the Church and the Sacraments, and because the history of Mysticism is the history of continual conflicts between it and sacramental and authoritative ecclesiasticism? But when did it become possible to regard such conflicts as showing that one of the two factors is illegitimate? Is there not a conflict also between the unquestionably Catholic ideal of asceticism and the equally unquestionable Catholic ideal of world supremacy? Are the great Mystics not the great Saints of the Church? Or shall it be held, against all that appears, that this Church cannot produce and tolerate independent piety *within its own lines*? Now, no Evangelical Christian certainly would ever think of confounding his delight in the warm spiritual life which Catholic Christianity exhibits in the centuries before the Reformation with full approval of it, if—one must unfortunately add it—he had made clear to himself what Evangelical faith is. . . . . The fondness, it is true, for "German" Mysticism has received a severe shock from records that have shown that if one is enthusiastic for Master Eckhart &c., and derives edification from him, one must be still more enthusiastic about St. Thomas, or about the Areopagite and Augustine. But still more powerful check will be needed if a view of history is to be got quit of which seems the proper one to

all fragmentary natures that deal in a *dilettante* way with religion, theology and philosophy : a Mystic that does not become a Catholic is a *dilettante*.' [1]

I append also a quotation from an exceedingly significant foot-note to p. 108 of the same volume. Professor Harnack is replying to the criticisms of two Catholic critics of his book. The italics are again his own.

'What I have set forth in these pages (pp. 97 ff.) has been keenly assailed by Lasson and Raffaele Mariano. Plainly enough they put before me the alternative of irreligious criticism or blind faith (*Köhlerglauben*), when on their side they claim for the Thomist Mysticism that it is the only form of religion in which faith and thought, history and religious independence, are reconciled. It must be the endeavour of each of us to find something in his own way. What we have ultimately to do with here is the great problem as to what history and the person of Christ are in religion, and then there is the other problem also as to whether religion is contemplation or something more serious. That the end to which our striving is directed is the same—the seeking, finding, and keeping hold of God—may be confidently granted on both sides. But my opponents have an easier position than I have: they can prove—and I recognise this proof—that the piety that culminates in Mysticism and the old ecclesiastical dogma hang together, *and they can at the same time let the question rest as to what reality of fact answers to the dogma.* That is to say, the dogma renders them the best services just when they are at liberty to contemplate it as a mobile and elastic

[1] Harnack, *History of Dogma*, English Translation, vi. 98, 99.

magnitude which hovers between the poles of an inferior actuality and that "highest" which can never have been actual as earthly; out of the darkness there is a pressing forward to the light; *luminous clouds show the path!*'

APPENDIX B

LOUISE LATEAU OF BOIS D'HAINE

'On August 13, 1869, there took place in the cottage at Bois d'Haine a most surprising event. God willed that there should be there, on that day, some important witnesses, men of religion and of the world and three women, all tried witnesses, as well as the mother of Louise and her two sisters. This event is, in itself, quite a revelation; the relation of it will, alone, rejoice Christian souls and strengthen their faith in the real presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ in the consecrated Host. I will now leave the story to be told by Dr. Lefebvre, who has recounted it in his essay on Louise Lateau. The eminent professor of the University of Louvain insists, with reason, upon this prodigy, as measuring the whole distance between the divine ecstasy and the magnetic ecstasy.

'The facts alone must speak,' he says. 'I have chosen the most extraordinary one of them all, and the one which would be the most incredible were it not established by absolutely reliable witnesses. I borrow it from the reports written by two ocular witnesses of it: the one is a statesman

who is reckoned among the most eminent men of our country; the other is Monseigneur d'Herbomez, bishop of British Columbia, beyond the Rocky Mountains. This remarkable prelate has passed twenty years of his life in evangelising savages among the most severe and constantly recurring privations and perils. His scientific knowledge is equal to his piety and apostolic devotion. As I have already said, Mgr. d'Herbomez, authorised to see Louise Lateau, was received in the little house at Bois d'Haine on Friday, August 13, 1869. He was accompanied by M. l'abbé Mortier, superior of the College of Bavay. In a few words, first of all, I remember that they found the young girl occupied in working her sewing-machine. Blood was flowing abundantly from her feet, her hands, her side, and from all round her head. The Bishop entered into conversation with Louise; he questioned her upon her visions. She replied with her customary sobriety, but with full intelligence. Soon the machine stopped suddenly, the two hands of Louise became immovable; she was ravished into an ecstasy.

'Mgr. d'Herbomez and M. l'abbé Mortier, during the whole of that day, followed the scenes of this ecstasy which they described in their report, and which the reader already knows. They tried different experiments with relics and blessed objects. Towards ten o'clock they were joined by M. le Curé, the parish priest, who had just administered the last sacraments to a woman in the neighbourhood. The reader knows that country priests sometimes carry the eucharistic species and the holy oils in two silver vessels, joined together, but which can be separated at will. The

one which carries the Host is known as the pyx. This double vessel is generally carried about in a silk case.

'As M. le Curé had communicated the sick woman with the only Host which the pyx contained, he thought—and Mgr. d'Herbomez, as well as M. l'abbé Mortier, thought the same—that the sacred vessels contained nothing but the holy oils ; otherwise they could not, without infringing the laws of the Church, have made the experiment of which I am about to speak.

'The idea struck them of trying what effect the contact of the vessel containing the holy oils would have upon Louise. What followed was so extraordinary that they considered it necessary to call a fourth witness. It was then that the statesman, to whom I alluded just now, M. ——, who inhabits a neighbouring country house, was begged to come to the little cottage of Bois d'Haine.

'The events which I am about to relate took place before him. I am here nothing but a simple historian, and I copy, word for word, the report of M. ——, which agrees, in its smallest details, with that of Mgr. d'Herbomez, which I have equally under my eyes.

'"M. l'abbé Mortier [the experiment was tried alternately by the Bishop of Columbia and by him] wanted to place the vessel with the holy oils near the lips of Louise. When he was about two yards from the chair upon which she was sitting, she exhibited an extraordinary trembling, lively movements and a transport of joy. She rose, and fell suddenly upon her knees in adoration, her trembling hands joined and held out towards the sacred vessels ; her face was truly seraphic. M. l'abbé Mortier drew back, always

holding the blessed instrument in his hands ; she followed the priest, who retired slowly. She was half-kneeling, half-standing, leaning forward, her hands joined ; she looked as if she were drawn by a magnet, and as if she were gliding rather than walking. M. l'abbé Mortier and Mgr. d'Herbomez, made her go right round the room in this way, and, each time that they stopped, Louise fell upon her knees in an attitude of adoration. When they had come back close to her chair, they removed the sacred vessels and placed them at some distance from her ; she sat down, returned to her immobility, and the ordinary scenes of the ecstasy went on again, just as upon other Fridays.

'"Mgr. d'Herbomez thought that a particle of the Eucharist had remained in the pyx, of which M. le Curé knew nothing, for he had not had time to make the customary purifications. To make sure of this, he detached the sacred vessels one from the other. He first presented the vessel for holy oils to Louise ; he was able to do this without any effect being produced upon her, but when he touched her lips with it, she smiled gently, as she did at the contact of blessed objects. But when the pyx was presented to her from a distance of two yards, the same scene of kneeling adoration and of ravishment which has just been described was renewed in every detail."

'Coming out of the cottage, after five hours, Mgr. d'Herbomez, accompanied by the three other witnesses, went to the parish church, and there, in their presence, he opened the pyx. They ascertained that a considerable particle of the consecrated species was in the sacred vessel.

'Meditating upon this remarkable event, an objection

presented itself obstinately to my mind. I know how inclined adepts in magnetism are to believe in the reality of the most extraordinary phenomena of lucidity. They will not fail to say that Louise is a *clairvoyante* of exceptional power; that she recognised the sacred vessels in their silk case; that she even saw, thanks to her exceptional lucidity, the blessed oil in its silver box, and the fragment of the sacred Host in its pyx.

'In spite of the very unscientific character of this doubt, I was determined to raise it. I demanded, therefore, a counter-proof; this was given under the following conditions.

'On Friday, November 19, 1869, at nine o'clock in the morning, the parish priest of Bois d'Haine, accompanied by M. le chanoine Hallez, a distinguished professor of the seminary at Tournai, went to the little house of the widow Lateau. Louise was plunged in her usual ecstasy. The parish priest had brought, in the silk case, which we have described above, a silver vessel, exactly like the pyx. This vessel contained an unconsecrated host. It was therefore the same instrument which Mgr. d'Herbomez had had in his hands during the experiment which I have just related.

'If Louise is a *clairvoyante* she will recognise the instrument which is used for the administration of the sick, the silk case, the pyx, and the host which it encloses. She will not fail to believe in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the spectators will see renewed the scenes of adoration which took place before Mgr. d'Herbomez and his companions. The parish priest presents, therefore, the instrument to Louise: she experiences nothing, no trans-

port, no act of adoration; she remains insensible and immovable.

'Thus, the event of August 13, verified by Mgr. d'Herbomez and the other witnesses who verified it with him, is not a phenomenon of somnambulistic or hypnotic clairvoyance, nor any other kind of nervous phenomenon. This conclusion is completely rigorous.

. . . . . .

'After the ecstasy at which Mgr. d'Herbomez had been present, Louise owned to the parish priest that, during her ravishment, she had had two kinds of illuminations: at first a strong one, such as she had been accustomed to every Friday, and which made her suffer; then, four or five times, very gentle illuminations, similar to those which she had experienced several times during Holy Communion. Some weeks afterwards (October 3) Father Seraphin asked her if she had ever felt a desire to communicate while she was in ecstasy; she replied that she had only once done so, upon one of the Fridays that had recently passed. The Passionist Father was inclined to think that she must have had this desire on the preceding August 9. He did not push his inquiries further, in order to leave Louise in complete ignorance of the marvellous event which had taken place in the presence of Mgr. the Bishop of Columbia.' *

* *Les Stigmatisées: Louise Lateau*, par le Dr. Imbert-Gourbeyre, pp. 158 ff. (Paris: Victor Palmé.)

APPENDIX C

THE PROBLEM OF THE MIRACULOUS

THE miraculous *in se* is not the subject of any special definition of the Church. From this it results that no particular theory of the miraculous is involved in Catholic Faith. But the definitions of Catholic dogma, on the other hand, are undoubtedly stated in terms of the miraculous : as, *e.g.*, the partheno-genesis of Christ and His resurrection.

Modern science claims to have reached the results which it has attained by acting on the assumption of the permanence and universality of one and the same force throughout the whole region of phenomena observable by man. The universality of force understood in this sense is not, then, an observed scientific truth, but is assumed as necessary for the observation of any scientific truth whatever.

It is not that to admit a break in that universality would be to discredit any particular science—as, *e.g.*, chemistry or geology—but that to do so would be to declare all possibility of scientific knowledge of the universe fallacious ; for the admission of such a break would destroy the fundamental assumption on which all such scientific knowledge rests.

The practical truth of this assumption is guaranteed *a posteriori* by the results which it enables us to achieve. There is no need to insist on these results ; all educated people are more or less acquainted with them, and it is evident that, so long as this fundamental assumption works

as sucessfully as it does, it would be a retrograde and indeed a suicidal step for scientific investigators to abandon it.

Taking the affirmations of the Church relative to the miraculous element in dogma, *as they stand*, they undoubtedly absolutely contravene this assumption of science. The theologian and the biologist thus appear to find themselves in an *impasse* which both cannot leave alive. For the Church does not merely assert another order in asserting the miraculous (were this so, religious and scientific conclusions could not clash, as they would be reached under different criteria and through different media, and would be concerned with a different subject matter). She asserts (in so far as she asserts a *dogmatic fact* involving the miraculous element) an intersection of the two orders : *i.e.* the very thing the impossibility of which is the presupposition of science.

Probably to most minds this is the most serious difficulty in the way of Faith. There seem to be only two solutions possible. One solution might be to say that when the Church describes a dogmatic fact, she does so only economically. The real content that she is conveying to us cannot perhaps reach us except under symbolic terms which have to be used in the necessary default of any others.

After all, language comes to us through our senses. Perhaps the analogy of metaphysics may hold good here. We talk of the Absolute 'underlying' or 'unifying' phenomena, although these terms have strictly no meaning outside the sphere of sense-perception. Yet the use of such terms is absolutely necessary to metaphysical thought, and one who should refuse to think in such symbols would soon find himself ceasing to think at all.

The other possible solution is no doubt more drastic. It consists in the assertion that the presupposition of the impossibility of miracles is only valid *as a regulative principle* and that, as such, it is strictly relative to the point of view implied in and the conclusions aimed at by physical science. That point of view and those conclusions belong to the sphere of the orderly arrangement of sense-perception—any moral or spiritual insight being expressly excluded—and to no other. Were sense-perception the only valid human experience, the necessary presupposition involved in its scientific arrangement would of course be a universal truth. I have attempted to show that this is not the case. In so far as it is not the case, other orders of knowledge—the metaphysical or the æsthetic, for example—may have their own quite different canons of truth. Why not also religious knowledge? Certainly it is no easier to 'reconcile' Hegelianism than Catholicism with scientific axioms if these latter are considered as anything more than purely practical and relative assumptions.

If this be admitted (and it is difficult to see how it can be contested), it follows that miracles (supposing miracles to be a canon of religious knowledge) might be occurring constantly, though science would be none the wiser. I have no competence to pronounce on the truth of either of these two solutions, but it would seem that one or other must be adopted. It has, I know, been suggested that miraculous events may not be really outside law as conceived by scientists, but only outside our present knowledge of the operations of law ; on this view a resurrection from the dead, supposing such an event to have occurred, is a natural

occurrence, and it is merely our ignorance of the conditions of life and death that prevents our understanding it as such and presumably, if necessary, repeating it. Not a few popular writers on religion in this country have fallen into the fallacy of supposing that this position solves the question. It solves it indeed by destroying it ; one factor of the problem devours the other ! For in this case the miraculous becomes nothing but a mistaken inference from an imperfect generalisation, rectified in due time, as others have been, through the advance of science.

Such a solution indeed is purely verbal and superficial, and can only be acceptable to those who do not understand the true nature of the problem.

I have said that Hegelianism contravenes the universal truth of the scientific axiom as much as Catholicism : perhaps the reader may be glad to see what Hegel himself says on the subject. After some remarks on the miracles of our Lord in the course of which he notes that the attestation to His Divinity was in Himself rather than in His miracles, which conversely derive their value from His Personality, he sums up the question as follows :

' It has further to be observed that miracles are, speaking generally, effects produced by the power exercised by Spirit upon the natural connexion of things—are an interference with the course and eternal laws of Nature. *But the truth is that it is Spirit which is this miracle, this absolute interference.* Life is already an interference with these so-called eternal laws of Nature ; it destroys, for instance, the eternal laws of mechanism and chemistry. The power of Spirit, and also its weakness, have still more effect on life. Terror can

produce death, anxiety illness, and so in all ages infinite faith and trust have enabled the lame to walk and the deaf to hear &c. *Modern unbelief in occurrences of this sort is based on a superstitious belief in the so-called force of Nature and its independence relatively to Spirit.*'[1]

The italics are my own.

It would certainly seem as difficult to harmonise the Hegelian theory of Spirit with the presuppositions of modern science (if these are to be considered as anything more than relative working hypotheses) as Catholicism.

I have only to add that everything said here is submitted to the judgment of the Theological School.

[1] Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion. The Absolute Religion.* Vol. iii. p. 119, English Translation.

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